

MPs resume the Questions farce with unaccustomed E's

IF YOU seek evidence of the chasm between MPs and youth culture, harken to an exchange yesterday between Barry Sheerman (Lab, Huddersfield) and Jack Cunningham, Britain's poshest Gentleman and Cabinet "Enforcer". Referring to the Government's drugs strategy, Sheerman told Cunningham that "students could be targeted with E's". Or that's how it sounded. Whether Hansard records it as "eas" or E's will tell us how streetwise their reporters are.

Early days, perhaps, for

nominations for the Best/Worst/Silliest of 1999 Awards, but Prime Minister's Questions yesterday at Westminster (where Government backbenchers allowed by the whips to ask questions are now sitting together, probably for protection) produced some strong contenders.

This sketch's Best Heckle nomination goes to Dennis Skinner, who, after a sputtering denunciation of Government policy by Paddy Ashdown, shouted "Sack 'im" to the Prime Minister. Both the Labour and the Tory benches

tell about Ashdown tried to be rude to Blair about the NHS patient's-eye view of this Government. "If you were a Labour voter . . ." he huffed, unwittingly reminding us of growing doubts on this question.

Blair seemed unfazed by Ashdown's rudeness. Now the two men sit together on a Joint Cabinet Committee, suspicion arises that the Liberal Democrat Leader may have penned a little note to Downing Street yesterday morning: "Dear Tony, I'll have to be a bit rough with you this after-

noon. Please don't take this personally — I've got to keep the lads on-side. Your pal, Paddy."

"Dear Paddy, Message understood. And I may have to be a bit rough, in reply. My lads are restive too. Cheers — and no hard feelings, Tony."

Our Luckiest Escape nomination goes to Peter Mandelson, who wasn't even there.

MATTHEW PARRIS

POLITICAL SKETCH

But William Hague's spirited try at stirring up the story of his resignation veered off track yesterday. Faced with the choice of piling on the agony over the Health Service, and piling on the agony over Labour's internal feuding, the Tory Leader simply couldn't make up his mind. So he tried to raise both, feebly linked. Ready for a massive frontal

assault on either, Blair did choose. He avoided the Mandelson question, preferring to answer on the NHS. Hague's charge faltered amid a half of statistics and counter-statistics about nurses.

Then a Tory, Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cotswold), resumed the Mandelson attack. But still Mandelson's luck held. Clifton-Brown had wrongly buttoned his double-breasted jacket and looked like it's blown. His doubles brilliant question sank in the hilarity.

And finally to our Teacher's Pet nomination. To Hazel

Bears (Lab, Salford), who is fast emerging as Mr Blair's Number One Little Ray of Sunshine. Yesterday, the perky, petite and relentlessly blithe Mrs Bears shared with Mr Blair her sorrow that "idle-tattle and gossip" about his Cabinet were all the media cared for, instead of "the important issues". She cited one of these "old people and young, disaffected teenagers working together in garden projects in Salford."

A relieved Blair turned away from idle-tattle to embrace the significance of this.

CHRIS HARRIS

NEWS IN BRIEF

Chile joins Pinochet hearing

The Chilean Government was granted permission to take part in next week's re-hearing of the General Pinochet appeal in the House of Lords. A panel of three law lords took five minutes to decide to allow Chile to present its case that, under international law, it enjoys state immunity from intervention in its internal affairs.

The law lords also announced that Lord Wolf, the Master of the Rolls, had removed himself from next week's appeal panel because of objections by General Pinochet's lawyers to his links to Amnesty International. Another unnamed law lord on the panel had declared remote links with Chile, but there had been no objections from the parties involved in the case.

Ashworth salary

Janice Miles, the chief executive who presided over the disgraced regime at Ashworth Special Hospital, has continued to draw her £7,000 salary since her resignation in 1997. It emerged yesterday that Ms Miles, who was severely criticised by the Fallon report this week, remains under contract to the Merseyside hospital until March.

Jail for air rage

Thomas Adams, 50, of Farnborough, Hampshire, was jailed for 12 months at Isleworth Crown Court after admitting that he hit a Virgin air stewardess, "breaking her nose, and spat at two others in a drunken rage when he wanted to smoke on a US flight."

Officer rewarded

An RUC sergeant covering one of the toughest republican areas of Belfast has won the national title of community police officer of the year. Sergeant Stephen Jones, 41, was chosen for his work in running a police unit in the Markets area of the city.

Under offer

The girl who devised a new code for sending secret messages by computer was yesterday day considering offers from three leading universities: Cambridge, Trinity College Dublin, and Liverpool. Sarah Flannery, 16, from Slaney, Co. Cork, is to publish her work.

Better by degrees

A pet cat was treated in Weymouth, Dorset, to remove the remains of a plastic toy thermometer lodged in its rear. A young girl had been given a toy set for Christmas and is believed to have learnt her technique from watching TV vet shows.

Hague attacks hospital crisis

By JILL SHERMAN, CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

WILLIAM HAGUE lambasted the Prime Minister yesterday over the NHS winter crisis, claiming the situation had worsened as a result of political fending between ministers.

As Tony Blair struggled to reassert his authority during the first Commons clash between the two men this year, Mr Hague blamed long waiting lists, bed cuts and nursing shortages on the Government's failure to get its priorities right.

"While the NHS has been in crisis, personal funds have taken the place of political principle and personal loans have taken the place of political priorities," Mr Hague said.

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The Royal National Institute for the Deaf questioned whether the £80 million that the Government has allocated to test the scheme in 12 pilot areas would stretch to providing professional sign-language interpreters for deaf people.

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A government spokesman

King picks up £7m purse in battle of boxing promoters

British fight organiser shares jokes with wild-haired former partner after judge agrees contract deal

THE heavyweight legal fight between the boxing promoters Frank Warren and his flamboyant American partner Don King was settled in the High Court yesterday with a £7.2 million payout to Mr King.

Britain's "Mr Boxing" agreed the settlement to make a "clean break" of their four-year partnership. The two men were in court, sitting a few feet apart, to hear Mr Justice Lightman agree the settlement.

The judge had ruled in March last year that there was an agreement that the two men would jointly promote British fighters, including Prince Naseem Hamed, the featherweight world champion. Mr Warren was therefore in breach of the duties he owed to Don King Promotions.

Mr King's spokesman, Peter Wilson, said at the time that the ruling meant that the contracts worth millions with all the boxers concerned were owned by the partnership.

Thus, with the winding up of the partnership, Mr Warren would have to buy out Mr King's 50 per cent stake "at a cost of tens of millions".

Mr King said after the short hearing yesterday that he did not regard the result as a victory.

According to Mr King's lawyers, Mr Warren has agreed to sell his house if necessary to make the first of a series of agreed payments.

Outside court, Mr King commented: "My reputation is most important to me and the vindication of my rights both here and in America. The justice system here has given me justice and I am very happy."

But he said he was not gloating over a victory. "I am very fond of him and will continue to be." Mr Warren then tried to persuade Mr King to buy him a meal and said that the settlement was "cheap at the price".

"I am free," Mr Warren said as he descended the lift from the courtroom. "I am glad this is all behind us, but it looks as if I shall be eating soup in a basket tonight."

Mr King added: "I have fought long and hard in the English courts to vindicate my reputation and my rights in the partnership which I made with Frank Warren and from which both he and English boxing derived great benefit.



Despite the smile and cigar yesterday, Don King was not gloating. He said that Frank Warren was still a friend

On every occasion when the court was required to give a ruling about my rights in this dispute, I have been 100 per cent successful, and the Court of Appeal upheld those rights in December.

By Frank Warren's withdrawal of his allegations and his agreement to pay me in accordance with my entitlement, my reputation has been up-

held. I am therefore very happy at the outcome of this case. I am glad that I can now put this unhappy episode behind me. The British people are warm, congenial and are tremendous boxing fans; I do not intend to abandon them."

Mr King said that he "fully intended" to continue promoting British boxers and to "give them opportunities in the box-

ing arena". He said that was why he had formed a partnership with Mr Warren and he would continue on that course, particularly with boxers who needed promotion.

One of the biggest bones of contention was a claim by Don King Productions Inc (DKP) that it was entitled to a share of all profits made by Mr Warren during the part-

nership from British and European fighters, including Hamed.

Asked yesterday whether he would still set up fights for Hamed in the US, he replied: "Naseem is a very good fighter. I will speak to him if he were to ask. The UK guys need a commitment and I will give that commitment to help those who are less fortunate."

Toby Melville

Cliff killing was revenge for abuse

By A CORRESPONDENT

A man abused as a child took revenge more than 30 years later by throwing his tormenter over a cliff to his death, a court was told yesterday.

Christopher Thomas, 32, told police that he nearly changed his mind as Edwin Wilcox began to pray on the top of Culver Cliff on the Isle of Wight. But he said that Mr Wilcox had prayed for himself instead of his victims, so he went to the cliff.

Anthony Donne, QC, for the prosecution, told Winchester Crown Court that the body of Mr Wilcox, 64, had never been found. But he said that from the day of the alleged murder, none of his friends or relatives had seen him. He had not been back to his flat, no money had been taken from his bank account and his Giro benefit cheques had not been cashed.

Thomas, a labourer of Newport, Isle of Wight, denies murdering Mr Wilcox, from Ryde, last January.

Mr Donne said that Thomas had told police that Mr Wilcox was a promiscuous and eccentric homosexual with a criminal record. He was a Portsmouth Football Club fan and the only trace of him had been a blue and white supporter's scarf found halfway down the cliff.

Mr Donne said: "According to what Thomas told police and other people, he pushed Mr Wilcox over the cliff. Why? Because Eddie Wilcox had abused him sexually when he was young and this was a revenge killing for being one of the people who he said had ruined his life."

Mr Donne said that Mr Thomas was asked whether he still had pushed him over the cliff if he had said a prayer for him. He replied: "Not about me. I didn't care about me. He had shown no remorse for what he had done to me or other people. So I dragged him down by his feet and threw him over."

Mr Thomas had said that he hated Mr Wilcox but would probably have spared him if he had prayed for his victims. He told police that he was surprised how calm he felt afterwards. He had gone home, made a cup of tea and had a good night's sleep.

The trial continues today.

Foster girl's father plans to launch custody battle

By CLAUDIA JOSEPH

THE natural father of one of the two girls missing with their foster parents plans to fight for custody of his daughter Jade, he said yesterday.

Paul Duckett announced he wanted to look after his daughter just 24 hours after his former girlfriend, Jackie Bennett, who is the natural mother of Jade, five, and Hannah, three, decided to offer the runaway foster parents her support.

In a change of heart, after Jeff and Jenny Bramley pleaded in an open letter to newspapers to be allowed to adopt their daughters, she admitted she understood their motives.

However Paul Duckett, 24, a computer businessman, who has barely seen his daughter since she was a baby, condemned the Bramleys, who today have been fugitives for four months.

He said: "This is a terrible crime. They cannot allow to get away with kidnap. They cannot continue to receive the public sympathy they are getting. If anyone else did it they would be hunted the length and width of the country and would be public enemy number one."

"The children need stability, they have obviously had a difficult time. They went to foster parents because they needed

that stability, they needed friends, they needed education. They're just not getting it. I want the children to be returned to start with and then my initial aim is to get Jade out of care and probably apply for residency."

Mr Bramley, 35, who worked as a postal worker, and his wife Jenny, 33, disappeared with the girls from their home in Ramsey, Cambridgeshire, on September 14, the day they were due to hand back the girls into local authority care.

They had been fostering the sisters since March and wanted to adopt them but, after sev-



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"Sick" surgeon was at grand prix

By SUE LAPPEMAN

A SURGEON who treated private patients while on sick leave from the NHS has lost his claim for wrongful dismissal. Gareth Sockett, 50, also jetted off to the Monaco Grand Prix then missed a long conference in Harrogate claiming it was too far to travel with his bad back.

The Royal Surrey County Hospital in Guildford sacked Mr Sockett from his £50,000 consultant's position on July 16 last year after discovering that he had treated private patients just hours after he walked out of a clinic claiming he was too ill. Hospital managers found he had held five separate sessions while on two weeks of sick leave which he took immediately before and after his trip to Monaco.

An employment tribunal in Croydon yesterday was told that Mr Sockett, a specialist in maxillo-facial surgery, which deals with facial deformities, was absent in total from May 12 until May 31 last year. He left for Monaco on the evening of the last day of his registered sick leave, May 21, using one day's holiday and a weekend for the three-day pre-booked trip. When he returned, he failed to attend a week-long conference for which he had been granted study leave, claiming it would be too painful to drive there.

Jeff Faulkner, the hospital's chief executive, told the tribunal that Mr Sockett should then have told the hospital he was too ill. Hospital managers found he had held five separate sessions while on two weeks of sick leave which he took immediately before and after his trip to Monaco.

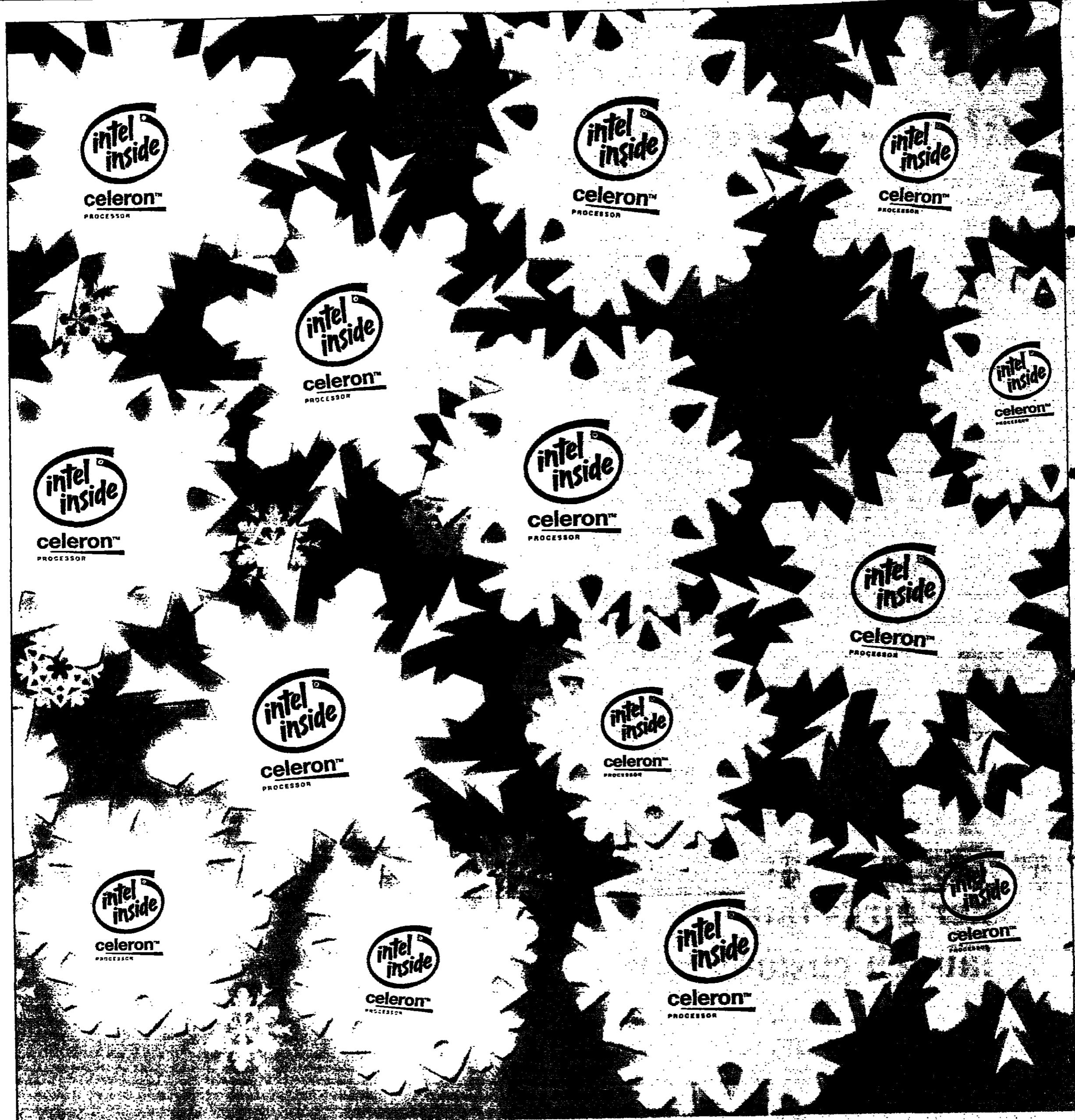
been a lot of trauma incidents to deal with. He should have been assisting junior doctors."

Mr Sockett, a father of four from Elstead, Surrey, said that he managed to make the trip to Monaco, but was too ill to travel to Harrogate. "The race lasted an hour or so and I watched it from the balcony of a friend's flat, not from the stand. I was moving around and chatting to people rather than standing in one place."

He said that a stand-in secretary filled in the sick leave forms incorrectly, which led to the mix-up with the hospital. But the tribunal chairman, David Milton, said: "They are entitled to enforce strictly that consultants do not work in private practices when they have ongoing NHS commitments."

Salvatore Ferragamo

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'Riot squads' to restore order at child prison

Officers from adult prisons will use batons to defend themselves against detainees, Richard Ford reports

PRISON officers in full riot gear will be sent into quell future disturbances at Britain's first child jail under plans drawn up by the Home Office.

Jack Straw wants "tornado teams" of helmeted officers dressed in protective clothing and armed with batons to be on standby to deal with 12 to 15-year-old troublemakers at the Medway Secure Training Centre in Kent.

The officers, fully trained in using tough control and restraint techniques on adult prisoners, will be called in from jails on the Isle of Sheppey and in Rochester in the event of a major threat to overall control.

Mr Straw's plan was disclosed on the eve of today's publication of a damning report into the running of the centre, which is managed by Rebound, a subsidiary of Group 4. The move is a further erosion of the progressive philosophy which underpinned the centre. It was originally based on the concept that persistent young offenders should be treated as children in need of education and training, not punishment and restraint.

But, as *The Times* disclosed in December, the centre was left in turmoil after a series of small riots forced the authorities to overhaul their approach in an attempt to restore discipline.

The inspection report of the purpose-built centre is highly critical of the frequency and extent of restraint techniques used by staff on youngsters at the centre during the early months of its operation last year. It will also criticise the regime provided to youngsters and the amount of time they were secluded in their rooms.

Management and staff at the centre are also criticised for serious failings and their

naivete in dealing with some of the country's most disturbed teenagers.

The training provided to the 100 staff at the centre, which holds detainees at a cost of £2,400 per head per week, is also condemned by the report of the Social Services Inspectorate, which visited the centre in the autumn.

In spite of the strong criticism of the centre, Sue Clifton, the director, is to remain in her job. No other staff at the centre, where more than £100,000 has been spent replacing and repairing facilities damaged by inmates, are to lose their posts.

Mr Straw has decided that prison officers should be used to deal with disturbances at the centre following a riot in June in which 11 of the residents ran amok. Staff were forced to seek safety from the young offenders before police in full protective gear were called to restore order.

But Mr Straw's plan to allow prison officers in riot gear to be used to end future disturbances has provoked opposition from senior officials in the prison service, the Prison Governors Association and the Prison Officers Association.

Richard Tilt, the director-general of the prison service, and his deputy, had expressed reservations about the plan and prison governors have questioned the legality of prison officers being allowed to use control and restraint techniques on children.

The Prison Officers Association has also expressed alarm at the effects of the techniques and at the public's reaction to prison officers being drafted in.

Mark Healy, chairman of the Prison Officers Association, which is to meet Home Office officials about the plan



"Tornado squads" from adult prisons will be used to end major disturbances at the Medway Secure Training Centre

Science discovers just why bees do it

BY NIGEL HAWKES
SCIENCE EDITOR

PROMISCUTY works for the bumble bee, scientists have found. By increasing genetic diversity, it protects colonies against attack by parasites.

Honeybee queens typically mate with 10 to 20 or more males on their nuptial flights. This seems surprising given the time and energy it expends.

Boris Baer and Paul Schmid-Hempel, of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, report in *Nature* that colonies from bumblebee queens inseminated with sperm from specially bred workers with high genetic diversity were the least affected by parasites.

The same would not be true for human beings, where diversity is insured by the fact that a single female is not responsible for giving birth to an entire population. By helping the spread of sexually transmitted disease, promiscuity in humans is more likely to worsen health, not improve it.



Jobs on the line: Tracy Brisbane, left, and Lily Ainslie

Woollen mills prepare for US cashmere war

By SHIRLEY ENGLISH

CASHMERE and bananas may not appear to have much in common, but a trade war over the fruit threatens to destroy the economy of a small mill town in the Scottish Borders.

While Europe and America argue over banana imports, the people of Hawick, where nine in ten manufacturing jobs are dependent on the knitwear industry, are bracing themselves for huge job losses.

The United States, in retaliation for European Union quotas favouring Caribbean bananas, is preparing to impose sanctions on cashmere products and certain other European imports. The cashmere industry has been targeted by the US for an increase in import tariffs from 6 to 100 per cent.

The knitwear industry in the Borders claims an increase this size would result in up to 1,000 job losses — a quarter of the knitwear workforce — and a loss of business worth £20 million.

Cashmere was named along with 16 other randomly chosen items, including batteries, handbags and windscreen wipers for the new tariffs in a list published last December. Since then the industry has made strenuous efforts to plead its case with America and the EU. Half of all European cashmere and 90 per cent of

British cashmere comes from the Borders.

The World Trade Organisation agreed this week to set up a panel to review the situation and is due to report back in March. But the cashmere industry says that will be too late.

Campaigners, including local MPs and the Scottish Cashmere Association, want the US to remove cashmere from the list immediately. Two Borders MPs, Michael Moore and Argyll Kirkwood, have called on Tony Blair to write to President Clinton over the issue.

Mr Moore, who was in Washington yesterday to brief US Government officials, said: "The trade war is a serious threat to the Borders and yet the dispute has nothing to do with the area."

The dispute could not have erupted at a worse time for cashmere: the bulk of American orders for the Autumn market are negotiated in January and the row is already having an impact on local knitwear firms.

Arthur Rennie, factory manager at Clan Douglas, which employs 120 people in Hawick, said: "If these sanctions go ahead the Scottish cashmere business will die."

Tracy Brisbane, 19, who works for the firm, said: "If the mill closes I'll have to move away from Hawick."



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Situation vacant: BBC seeks new Birt

Budding director-generals can reply to newspaper adverts. Raymond Snoddy looks at the contenders

THE BBC is expected within days to appoint headhunters to find Sir John Birt's successor as Director-General. The post, worth more than £300,000 a year, will also be advertised in national newspapers.

Sir John was the clear choice of the Chairman of the BBC, Marmaduke Hussey, now Lord Hussey, when he was appointed in 1992. This time the field is open, and the position could go to an insider or to any one of a number of talented broadcasters from outside the corporation.

The main internal candidates are Tony Hall, chief executive of BBC News; Mark Byford, chief executive of BBC World Service; Mark Thompson, director of regional broadcasting; and Matthew Bannister, chief executive of BBC Production. Patricia Hodgeson, director of policy and planning, and Rupert Gavin, chief executive of BBC Worldwide, the corporation's commercial arm, may also be in the running.

There is a rich collection of external candidates, including Michael Jackson, chief executive of Channel 4; David Elstein, chief executive of Channel 5; Greg Dyke, chairman and chief executive of Pearson Television; Richard Eyre, chief executive of the ITV Network Centre; and Howard Stringer, president of Sony's operations in the United States.

Sir Christopher Bland, who succeeded Lord Hussey as Chairman of the BBC's Board of Governors, has had his term extended by two years until 2003. The reason for the extension was to provide continuity and to oversee the appointment of the new director-general and their settling in. The



Birt was Chairman's clear choice for post

ter an immediate period of financial stringency. Under a five-year licence fee settlement, the BBC was given three years of licence fee increases above the rate of inflation to help to launch new digital channels. Sir John's replacement will arrive in time for two years when the licence fee will rise at less than the rate of inflation.

As the digital revolution gathers pace, the director-general will have to resist the temptation to rely on increasingly populist programmes to prop up ratings. The BBC will almost certainly be required to generate more revenue from its commercial activities - selling programmes, videos and merchandise abroad.

This week Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, set up a task force to review the future of the licence fee and to consider alternative ways of raising income through commercial ventures.

John Birt became Director-General in December 1992 after five years as Deputy Director-General. His replacement would ideally have both programme-making and commercial experience. Although the corporation's public service duties, funded by the universal licence fee, will remain its central role, the Government is keen for the broadcaster to explore ways of earning additional revenue.

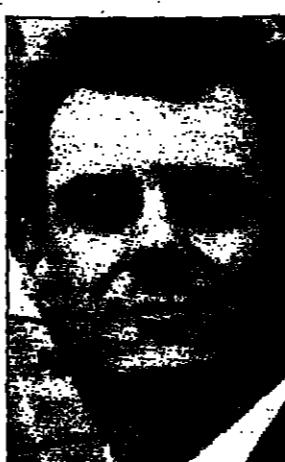
There will, however, be a background of stability for the next seven years. The Government has decided that the licence fee itself will not be in question, at least until 2006, when the BBC's present Royal Charter runs out.



Tony Hall, chief executive of BBC News. The most experienced of the internal candidates and a Birt loyalist, but had a bad year in 1998 because of technological and structural problems.



Mark Byford, chief executive of BBC World Service, is clearly being groomed for the highest BBC office, but has only been in his job a couple of months after a successful stint in the regions.



Michael Jackson, chief executive of Channel 4, former controller of BBC 2 and BBC Broadcast chief. The vacancy may have come too early as he has not had time to stamp his authority on Channel 4.



Matthew Bannister, the man who gave Radio 1 'street cred' but a huge drop in listeners is also in the running, but again it looks too early. After career in radio, recently became chief executive of BBC Production.



Greg Dyke, chairman of Pearson Television. Friend of Sir Christopher Bland and Sir John Birt from LWT days, but would be a radical choice for BBC. Notoriously impatient with bureaucracy.



Howard Stringer, a Welshman who has spent his career in the US. Used to run CBS, now president of Sony in US. At 56 he would be an interim choice, giving BBC's young Turks time to gain experience.



Richard Eyre, chief executive of ITV Network Centre and former chief executive of Capital Radio. Making a good job of reviving ITV, but has no real experience of making programmes.

BBC's ratings fall below 30% for first time

BY CAROL MIDGLEY
MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

BBC's annual share of the television audience has dropped below 30 per cent for the first time, new figures show.

News of the decline comes at a difficult time for the BBC: Chris Smith, the Culture Secretary, this week set up a task force to look at the future of the licence fee and alternative ways of raising revenue.

The BBC emphasised that all terrestrial channels had shown a loss and it was an inevitable consequence of the increase in choice of channels. Figures from the Broadcasters' Audience Research Board for 1998 show the BBC's share fell from 30.8 per cent to 29.5 per cent on the previous year. ITV's viewing share fell from 32.9 per cent to 31.7 per cent. BBC2 stayed ahead of Channel 4, with 11.3 per cent, compared with 10.2 per cent.

Apart from the increased number of cable and satellite channels, much of the BBC's loss can be attributed to Channel 5's increased audience.

Last year was not a particularly happy one for the corporation. In the BBC's Annual Report, the governors said that the output of situation comedies had been "disappointing". BBC1 was also criticised in the Commons over its National Lottery Big Ticket Show. Critics said it breached the spirit of the BBC Charter and encouraged young people to buy scratchcards.

Many of BBC1's Saturday evening programmes attracted fewer viewers than those on ITV.

Last Sunday, BBC1's new series of the drama *The Lakes* attracted about 7 million viewers. On ITV, *Heartbeat* and London's *Burnt* attracted 15.4 million and 10.3 million respectively.

A BBC spokeswoman said: "Of course we are disappointed, but we are not surprised. There is more competition from satellite and cable and Channel 5. This is the environment we are in. BBC1 had to compete against 19 new digital channels, but concentrated on quality. We have to remember our charter."

Radon homes risk 'exaggerated'

BY NIGEL HAWKES, SCIENCE EDITOR

THE dangers of radon, blamed for thousands of deaths worldwide each year, may have been exaggerated. A study at Columbia University in New York suggests that the low levels of exposure to alpha radiation in homes contaminated by radon may not be responsible for as many cancers as previously thought.

If confirmed, it would mean that radon exposures ten to 100 times higher experi-

enced by radon miners - which do cause lung cancer - could not be extrapolated to the home. David Brenner and colleagues exposed 250,000 mouse cells to a single alpha particle, and found that one in 10,000 developed a cancerous mutation, almost indistinguishable from the natural mutation rate.

He then used a random distribution of alpha particles, so that some cells received several and some none at all. The overall dose remained one per cell. In this experi-

ment, there were three mutations per 10,000 cells. He concludes, according to *New Scientist*, that most of the damage occurs in cells exposed to several hits. Two particles hitting a cell in quick succession appear to be six times more dangerous than one. If so, domestic exposures would seldom be sufficient to trigger cancer.

The National Radiological Protection Board says the number of mutations detected in Dr Brenner's experiments was too low to determine the true effect.

microscopic particles, linked with heart attacks and breathing difficulties, are thought to contribute to up to 24,000 deaths annually.

A review of the National Air Quality Strategy disclosed that levels of particulates in this country are affected by winds carrying them from the Continent. The main sources are vehicle exhausts and emissions from power stations. It is thought that particles blown over from the Continent account for up to 40 per cent of the total.

Michael Meacher, the Environment Minister, said: "This is a problem the UK cannot solve on its own. We intend to discuss with our European partners how this issue can be taken forward."

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Air pollution 'imported'

BY ELIZABETH JUDGE

BRITAIN will not be able to meet its target for reducing levels of airborne pollution, the Government has admitted.

John Prescott, Secretary for Environment, Transport and the Regions, said yesterday that the target set for reducing the level of particulates by 2005 was "unrealistic". The

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Beatings that make a mockery of peace

Martin Fletcher meets two angry victims of paramilitary punishment

SIX masked IRA men burst into Noel Diver's house last Saturday, pulled the 24-year-old from the sofa and beat him with baseball bats and an iron bar. It was several minutes before they realised that they had the wrong house and the wrong man.

They left without a word, went next door, seized 22-year-old Michael Brennan, and offered a running commentary as they smashed his limbs.

"Wait till you hear this one break," one shouted as he swung a baseball bat down at Mr Brennan's arm. "You're a big man now," said another as they left their victim groaning on his kitchen floor.

This is the story of everyday life on one of the many housing estates in Northern Ireland where republican or loyalist paramilitary groups rule through terror, where the police venture only in armoured Land Rovers, and where neither the ceasefire nor the Good Friday accord have made a jot of difference.

Punishment beatings are commonplace and, like most forms of summary justice, they are often inflicted on the innocent. There have been at least 16 in the first two weeks of this year, not to mention half a dozen shootings and numerous exiles. The only difference in this case is that Mr Diver and Mr Brennan have dared go public. "I don't care what more can they do to me," Mr Diver said. "They just beat me."

Mr Diver lives with his partner and child on an overtly republican estate in Strabane, Co Tyrone. The Republic's flag flutters from lamposts. English street signs have been re-

placed by homemade ones in Irish, and there is a stone memorial to an IRA "volunteer" killed by "Crown forces". The walls are daubed with graffiti proclaiming: "RUC — May You Burn in Hell" and "RUC Scum Out". Here the IRA keeps order, but with a brutality that is every bit as bad as that which it accuses the police.

Mr Diver was alone and watching television when the IRA men, wearing black masks and bomber jackets, kicked in his front and back doors at about 6pm. Four be-

ings tying in front of the fire with their nine-month-old baby boy, and she threw herself on top of him to protect him.

One of the IRA men grabbed the baby's arm and threw him on the sofa. Mr Brennan told Denise to get off him, for her own safety, and three of the men dragged him into the kitchen. A louring kept her in the living room, where she heard every blow.

"I had to listen to it," she said. "I heard him screaming and begging them to stop.

"Wait till you hear this one break," one shouted as he swung a baseball bat down on Mr Brennan's arm.

They beat him for about 15 minutes. When they had left he was chalk white, lying in pain, his arms just dangling.

Both Mr Brennan and Mr Diver were taken to hospital. Mr Diver had a broken ankle and severe bruising on his legs, but was discharged on crutches that night.

Mr Brennan had multiple fractures to both arms and a smashed left elbow. He required one operation to reset the bones, and a second for a skin graft. His thighs and calves are still covered in blue-

and-yellow bruises. "I don't know how my legs are not broken," he said. He is in intense pain, and will be in hospital for days to come. The damage to his left arm is likely to be permanent.

Mr Brennan, who is unemployed, said that the paramilitaries ordered him to leave the estate months ago, but that he used to sneak back to see his girlfriend and their two children. Beatings are usually meted out for "anti-social behaviour", such as drug-dealing, theft or defying the paramilitaries, but he said that he had no idea what he had done wrong. He called his attackers "scumbags".

To Mr Diver, Mr Brennan and their partners, the peace process is an irrelevance. "It's changed nothing as far as I'm concerned," said Denise.

The statistics bear her out. There were 237 beatings, shootings and kneecappings recorded last year, and the rate has significantly increased in 1999.

The attacks are a blatant breach of the Good Friday accord by loyalist and republican groups whose political representatives now sit in the Northern Ireland assembly. The Government and the Province's political leaders regularly condemn the attacks, but no attempt has been made to sanction those representatives. The thugs themselves are rarely, if ever, caught.



Michael Brennan, left, and Noel Diver were beaten with baseball bats and an iron bar

New day is set for deal over weapons

By MARTIN FLETCHER

THE Government yesterday March 16 as the transferring power to the Northern Ireland Assembly on the issue of IRA disarmament is resolved by then.

Mo Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary, said fort to concentrate on and republican mind Monday I said the line was now in sight, and publishing the me of how to get there.

March 16 is the earliest by which the necessary action can be put through, but it also falls week before the political leaders attend Patrick's Day celebrations at the White House. The more pressure on them to solve the decommissioning issue.

David Trimble, the Northern Ireland Minister, says he can't will not establish an executive that includes Sinn Féin. The IRA demonstrated commitment to peace means with a downing of weapons.

Sinn Féin's leader is equally adamant the Good Friday accord's conditions on their return to government and if any case, they could never IRA disarmament.

Dr Mowlam acknowledged the hurdles ahead, but that the will existed to mount them and that wanted to return to violence.

Australian PM rebuffs Adams

AUSTRALIA'S Prime Minister yesterday ruled out meeting Gerry Adams and belittled his role in Northern Ireland's peace accord. John Howard said that David Trimble and John Hume were the real heroes, as they had forged a peace all along.

Mr Adams, the Sinn Féin president, was barred until recently from entering Australia and will arrive there on February 15 for an eight-day visit in which he will meet a number of political figures.

Mr Howard's fellow conservative, Jeff Kennett, the Premier of Victoria, who will meet Mr Adams in Melbourne, said it would have been "churlish" to refuse an invitation. The Foreign Minis-

ter, Alexander Downer, also indicated that he would be happy to meet Adams if invited, as will the Opposition Labor leader, Kim Beazley. However, a spokesman for Mr Howard formally ruled out a meeting and said that the Prime Minister regarded Mr Trimble and Mr Hume as the heroes of the peace accord.

The Prime Minister would be honoured and privileged to meet either or both of them if they came to Australia. They foreswore violence all along and were recognised as such with the Nobel Peace Prize.

A spokesman for Mr Adams said that he was willing to meet anyone who wanted to see him, but he would not lose any sleep if Mr Howard declined.

Mr Howard, an avowed monarchist and supporter of a British head of state for Australia, has previously demonstrated similar opposition to South Africa's President Mandela. South Africa is one of the few important trading partners of Australia that Mr Howard has not visited and Mr Mandela has not been to Australia during Mr Howard's rule.

Australia formally acknowledged the IRA ceasefire and Mr Adams's contribution to the peace talks when it granted him a visa last November.

Crimes by girls rise tenfold

By ALEXANDRA FREAN

THE number of teenage girls with criminal convictions has risen tenfold in the past 10 years, according to a report on the changing fortunes of youth.

The study, commissioned by the Variety Club of Great Britain, a children's charity, shows that, although the majority of juvenile crime is still committed by boys, it is rising much faster among girls.

Between 1949 and 1996, the conviction rate among boys aged 10 to 17 almost tripled from 1.85 per 100,000 to 4.40 in England and Wales.

Among girls, the rate rose from 1.37 per 100,000 to 1.50.

Over the same period the total number of young people found guilty of a crime rose from 65,600 to 179,300.

Roger Smith, head of policy at the Children's Society, said that much of the increase was probably because there were more police. Moreover, as more people insured their property, there was a greater incentive to report burglaries. "It is also true to say that there is more to steal today," he said.

Resentment at 'morning after' calls

By HELEN RUMBLELOW

MORE than a third of hospitals refuse to give women emergency contraception because casualty doctors do not see it as a priority, a report says today.

A survey of all 560 accident and emergency departments in Britain found that 96 per cent were often asked for emergency contraception, such as the "morning after" pill, but only 57 per cent provided it. Even among those, a fifth felt it was a misuse of overburdened resources.

Half of all the departments, which were surveyed by Babonne Gholadze, consultant gynaecologist at St James's University Hospital, Leeds, said that there was strong opposition to the service from their staff, mostly from doctors.

This conflicts with Department of Health guidelines on reducing unwanted pregnancies. Hospitals' 24-hour service is thought to be vital in delivering effective emergency contraception, which works better if taken within a day of unprotected sex.

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Backbenchers urge ministers to behave

LP says party discipline must apply to everyone, writes Jill Sherman

DR Labour backbenchers yesterday urged the Government to get its act together strongly condemning ministers for failing to adopt strict discipline as party MPs.

At a packed meeting of the minority Labour Party, led by Peter Mandelson, spoke out against ministerial behaviour in recent days, claiming that it had done more damage to the Government than any other episode in this Parliament.

More than 200 MPs — over half the PLP — attended the meeting, as did several ministers, including John Reid, Alistair Darling, Ann

Margaret Beckett and Brown. Mr Mandelson, who resigned over home loan affair, remained silent throughout the meeting.

One of the most outspoken was Gwyneth Dunwoody, the MP for Crewe and Nantwich, who has been a minister for more than 30 years. She told MPs that she was disappointed that the Government had focused recently on individuals rather than

the most disloyal parliamentary party I ever been a member of."

It was a pity that the same discipline has not been



Strong words: Gwyneth Dunwoody and Clive Soley

shown by some members of the Government."

Kevin Barron, MP for Rother Valley, echoed Mrs Dunwoody's comments, saying that his own constituency party had been disillusioned by the events of the past month, which has seen the resignation of two ministers and one press aide.

Clive Soley, chairman of the PLP and a Blair loyalist, was equally critical of the Government. He said that the events of last month were the most "serious incidents" since the general election, and that counter-briefing and spinning against ministers had to stop.

Mr Soley, who later conveyed the same message to the Prime Minister at a meeting of

he could see nothing wrong with working with the Liberal Democrats in areas of common interest.

Mr Soley used his later meeting with Mr Blair to press home MPs' concerns that Mr Mandelson should not return too quickly to government. Senior figures in the party argue that it would be highly damaging to the Prime Minister if he was seen to rely too heavily on Mr Mandelson and that it was vital that he publicly distanced himself from the former minister. Mr Soley believes that Mr Mandelson should not return to government before the next election.

Later, Paul Flynn, MP for Newport West, echoed his colleagues' warnings that Mr Mandelson must not be allowed to return too soon. "The party has been bruised and our reputation has been damaged by this incident," he said.

"Nobody wants to have a witch-hunt against Peter Mandelson personally. He has been a very able minister and has contributed a great deal to our party. But that impression of sleaze is there and he has to have at least a couple of years on the backbenches, and one hopes that that is a very fruitful period," he told BBC Radio 4.

Jack Cunningham, the Cabinet "enforcer", insisted that there was no chance of Mr Mandelson making a swift re-



Chided: Peter Mandelson leaving the Commons yesterday

turn. "I don't think he's going to be back in the Government in the near future and those people who write those stories in the newspapers are just misleading not only Labour backbenchers, but the public as a whole," he said.

Lord Shore, a Cabinet minis-

ter in the last Labour Government, also criticised the decision to allow Mr Mandelson to meet a German politician last week as a personal representative of Mr Blair. He dismissed the Government's defence that Mr Mandelson had been acting in a party capacity, rather than a Government capacity.

"In fact, he was meeting a German who was a minister and, therefore, the appropriate person to meet that minister was a minister," Lord Shore said.

"This is too early, frankly, and the rehabilitation of Peter Mandelson isn't in his interests, nor I think in the interests of the Prime Minister."

Testing time for Byers and sellers

The resignation of Peter Mandelson has been examined from almost every angle, apart, curiously, from the most direct one: his legacy at the Department of Trade and Industry. During his five months there, he raised the profile of the department and the morale of its civil servants, in the process earning praise from many business leaders. He put substance into the Blairite rhetoric about creating a new relationship with industry.

That presents an intriguing challenge for Stephen Byers, the twelfth Trade and Industry Secretary in less than 19 years. He shares the modernising agenda of his predecessor and is the very model of the New Labour minister. But he is not as well known nor as close to the Prime Minister as Mr Mandelson.

Mr Byers is likely to be cautious in the short term. He has already been careful to ensure that any decisions resulting from the inquiry into Geoffrey Robinson will be taken by Sir Michael Scholar, his Permanent Secretary, although Mr Byers will answer to Parliament.

Mr Byers is keen to be seen as a "team player", working closely with his former departmental bosses, Gordon Brown and David Blunkett, as well as Alan Milburn.

His first big decision has been to endorse one of Mr Mandelson's last decisions on the *Fairness at Work* proposals on trade union law. After looking at the latter's statement on December 17, Mr Byers decided that it would be more trouble than it was worth to reopen the agonisingly crafted compromise package on compensation and recognition. He has now told John Monks of the TUC and Adair Turner of the CBI of his view. Mr Byers

sees the *Competitiveness White Paper*, published a few days before Mr Mandelson's resignation, as a good modernising statement. But it left open a number of questions: for instance, a consultative paper will come out shortly on whether mergers should still be decided by ministers. Expect to see a greater linkage between competition and a package to help consumers.

Mr Byers is also interested in developing policy on science and updating the skills of those in work. The Government package last year to help preserve jobs in the coal industry was essentially a holding exercise and further decisions will have to be taken on energy policy to promote competition.

Mr Byers was out in front in the debate about when and how, rather than if, Britain joins a single currency. Mr Byers is in the pro-European camp, but is likely to be tactically more cautious for the time being. His priority is helping business deal with the launch of the Euro this month and, at present, he still sees decisions on British entry coming after the general election.

There is a tricky phase for the Government during the next few months as Germany, holding the European presidency for the first half of the year, pushes proposals on tax harmonisation. This has already affected the tone of some comments by businessmen about Europe. Mr Byers is unlikely to be as much as high-profile campaigner on Europe as Mr Mandelson.

Mr Byers has risen fast so far by being the quintessential Blairite. He is above all determined to show that the New Labour agenda has not stalled and that means keeping the DTT in the public eye.

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Cabinet stands by its man in Welsh contest

BY ROLAND WATSON AND VALERIE ELLIOTT

TONY BLAIR is to spearhead a Cabinet drive to boost the profile of Alun Michael, the Welsh Secretary.

It comes amid serious concern in Downing Street that Mr Michael is failing to make ground on Rhodri Morgan in the race to become the Principality's First Minister.

The Prime Minister will be joined by John Prescott and Mo Mowlam. They will speak to the party's rank and file in Wales over the next 48 hours with Mr Michael by their side.

Gordon Brown is expected to visit in the next fortnight.

More than 100 senior members of the Welsh Labour Party are due to attend a drinks reception in No 10 tonight.

Mr Michael faces a critical test of his leadership chances on Saturday, when the AEU becomes the first big union to choose between him and Mr Morgan. However, since he took over from Ron Davies in October, the party hierarchy is alarmed at the lack of evidence that Mr Michael has closed

the huge gap between him and the maverick Mr Morgan.

With five weeks to go, Mr Michael suffered a serious blow with the announcement of the departure of his most senior civil servant, Rachel Lomax, permanent secretary at the Welsh Office, is to take up a new post in the Department of Social Security. She had previously insisted that she intended to "see through" the creation of the Welsh assembly and to become its first permanent secretary.

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THE TIMES THURSDAY JANUARY 14 1999

HOME NEWS 11

MPs condemn waste of cash in care budgets

By IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

CONFUSION. Duplication and fragmentation of health and social services means elderly and disabled people are failing to get the care they need and scarce resources are being wasted, according to the House of Commons Select Committee on Health.

Calling for an end to the "tribalism" between the two services, the committee says in a report published yesterday that charging for home visits probably costs more than it collects and that the best way forward is to integrate the two services with a joint budget.

Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, has admitted that a "Berlin Wall" exists between health and social services.

The report says: "This confusion is epitomised by the farcical question of whether a person needing a bath should receive a 'health bath' or a 'social bath' — the first comes free, the second (in theory at least) has to be paid for on a means-tested basis." In one authority area the riddle of the bath had been solved by declaring that all washing above the waist was for social reasons and all washing below the waist was for health reasons.

At present, health care is provided free of charge through the NHS, while social care in the home has to be paid for if a patient has money. Local au-

thorities are assumed to be able to raise 9 per cent of the cost of home care through charges, but the figure varies across the country from nothing to 23 per cent.

"Current charging policies

create perverse incentives, including cost-shifting between agencies," the report says. "It is arguable that charging, particularly for domiciliary care services, is having a detrimental effect on potential collaboration between agencies, which more than outweighs the benefits of the revenue. We believe the charging regime will always be a barrier to some people accessing services."

The committee calls for a survey to be carried out urgently to find out what the impact of charges is on the NHS and to look into the implications of abolishing them altogether. One consequence was that hospital patients who were fit enough to go home could not do so because home care could not be arranged. Relatives who would have to pay for care in the home wanted the patient to stay in the hospital for free, though the hospital urgently needed the bed.

The committee found that, in the first quarter of this financial year, 6,000 people over 75 were in hospital because discharge could not be carried out for "bureaucratic rea-

sons", rather than because they were too unwell to go home. Terminal cancer patients were often unable to leave hospital for up to 26 days because of the difficulty in putting together a social services package for them.

David Hinchliffe, chairman of the committee, and the Labour MP for Wakefield, said that there was a pressing need for national criteria to assess care needs in order to stop people in different parts of the country being treated in different ways.

The NHS Confederation

said that it did not agree that the health service should make long-term investments in local authority services.

"NHS funding is made available by Parliament for health and health services, not social care," said Stephen Thornton, its chief executive.

Winter heat kills last Ice Age frog

By NICK NUTTALL
ENVIRONMENT
CORRESPONDENT

A WHOLE species was declared extinct yesterday after the death of "Lucky" the pool frog at the weekend.

No other native example of *Rana lessonae*, believed to have survived in Britain since the last Ice Age 10,000 years ago, has been seen in the wild since Lucky was captured in 1993, and experts believe it was the last of a line.

It means that Britain has now only one species of native frog, the common frog or *Rana temporaria*. Charles Snell, an amphibian expert at Greenwich University who was looking after Lucky, who is believed to have died of old age, said that the warm winter had been a disaster for the male pool frog.

"Warm winters are not good for hibernating frogs



Lucky, the last of his kind

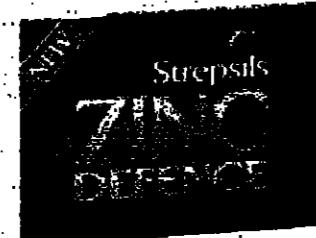
and he kept waking up, which was very bad news," he said.

The pool frog is fairly common on the Continent. Over the past 150 years, its only stronghold in Britain has been small pools in Norfolk left over from glaciation.

Lucky was captured by a Norfolk naturalist who managed to breed him with European females. One hope is to try to breed back the British pool frog from continental offspring. "All is not lost. I do have pool frogs with British genes in them," Dr Snell said.



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The hippo that is a bit of a handful

A BABY pygmy hippopotamus went on show for the first time at Whipsnade Wild Animal Park yesterday.

The orphaned animal, which is four weeks old and weighs 7.8 kilograms, loves nothing more than a warm bath and a tickle behind the ears, according to her keeper, Cliff Tack.

"It's wonderful to have this youngster here and I'm looking forward to her growing up within our breeding programme," he said. "She's a thirsty little thing and loves her milk."

Veterinary surgeons performed an emergency Caesarean section on her mother, Valenta, who died during surgery.

Pygmy hippos, which are found in West Africa, are an endangered species. Officials at the park in Bedfordshire hope their specimen will be part of a Europe-wide breeding programme.

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Kosovo hostages deal averts the threat of Serbian offensive

EIGHT Yugoslav Army soldiers held hostage by ethnic Albanian guerrillas were released yesterday, with the Albanians winning an extraordinary concession from the Serb authorities. In a secretive deal with international monitors, it was agreed that nine Albanian fighters should be freed later next week.

William Walker, the head of the ceasefire verification mission in Kosovo, said that for the moment at least the possibility of a new Serb offensive had been avoided.

KLA has won a surprising concession,
Tom Walker reports from Likovac

But for five tense hours yesterday in the remote central Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) headquarters of Likovac, the ambassador and his team cut gloomy figures.

The day did not start auspiciously for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (Oscce), one of whose vehicles slipped off the muddy track lead-

ing to Likovac, while the convoy bringing Mr Walker became lost. A bloody corpse dumped on the main road outside Pristina hardly helped to raise spirits. Journalists and international officials alike were then for some reason directed by the KLA down a track known as one of the most deadly in Kosovo.

The OSCE, whose

Knut Vollebek, the Norwegian Foreign Minister, had been distinctly upbeat about the hostage release on Tuesday night, became increasingly uneasy as the hours ticked by in the derelict village, which was burned by Serb forces in a counter-offensive in the late summer. "It's bloody ridiculous what the Albanians are asking for," said one source.

While the talks dragged on, the international media and the less important ranks of Oscce did their best to stay warm and sustained

themselves with tea and spicy beefburgers in the local KLA cafe. The guerrillas completely surrounded the village, and expelled journalists from the Serb state news agency, Tanjug.

When the deal was at last announced in the gathering darkness, Mr Walker was reluctant to be drawn on any concessions made to the KLA. However, sources close to his organisation admitted that the Serb authorities had agreed to release nine KLA fighters, three of whom were from Montenegro — were released as soon as the deal was fixed in the

northern mining town of Kosovo Mitrovica. Communications were maintained with the rebel captors throughout the day by KLA satellite telephone.

□ **Tirana:** The Albanian Parliament approved legislation aimed at stemming the illegal exodus of people across the Adriatic Sea to Italy by dinghy. The new law took effect immediately. It bans boats of less than two miles from the coast unless they advise the border police first. (AP)

Refugee wave set to break on German border

FROM ROGER BOYES IN ZITTAU

TENS of thousands of Kosovo Albanians, the vanguard of a new European refugee wave, are waiting in Czech boarding houses and farmsteads for their chance to slip through the forests into Germany, and into euroland.

The town that is taking the strain is Zittau, the end of the German railway line, Saxony's most remote southeastern corner. There, everybody is feeling the pressure of the distant Kosovo war. On euroland's frontline are the taxi drivers of Zittau who, in a remarkable token of the country's increasing fear of illegal immigration, are being arrested and jailed for picking up any strangers who look like Kosovars.

About 300,000 people from former Yugoslavia used Germany as a haven during the Balkan wars of the mid-1990s and administered a shock to

the system, giving fresh wind to right-wing extremists, sparking tension in local communities. Asylum rules have been tightened and a new German Government echoes the sentiment of the Kohl administration: the boat is full.

The Saxon-Czech border is a neutral point. Kosovars who have paid about \$5,000 (£3,300) each — their life savings — to "people smugglers" regard it as an easier crossing than the traditional route across the frozen Oder and Neisse rivers dividing Germany and Poland to the north.

The focus of illegal immigration has shifted from the Polish to the Czech border," says Bernd Walter, head of the eastern section of the German border police. His 500-mile territory covers most of the German border with the Czech Republic and Poland. Nearly 18,000 "illegals" were arrested

last year, 13,000 of them close to Zittau. At least 40,000 evade his grip.

Twenty thousand Kosovars have taken shelter in Bosnia: tens of thousands more are making their way into Austria. But it is here along the craggy, snow-capped foothills and valleys of the Lausitz mountains that the professional "people smugglers" are pushing hardest.

Quite simply, Germany is seen as Europe's most comfortable berth. The number of border guards has been trebled to 2,000; their fast patrol cars, camouflage vans and snarling dogs are part of the local scene.

The surly faces of the taxi drivers reveal more, however, than the slight swagger of the frontier guards with their secure jobs, pensions and smart uniforms. For the drivers have — in a move quite unprecedented in Europe — become foot soldiers in the war against illegal immigration.

If a cab driver in Zittau, or anywhere else on the border, picks up a foreigner who later turns out to be an illegal immigrant, he can be jailed. In the Zittau region 22 out of 73 taxi drivers are being investigated on charges of assisting illegal immigrants and six have been jailed for terms between 12 and 26 months.

The local chamber of commerce advises taxi drivers to avoid foreign-looking passengers who appear to be wet or carrying luggage. Even though I am blond, blue-eyed, carried no bag and was entirely dry, my Zittau driver wanted to check my passport before letting me into his car.

He was right to be suspicious. Later in the day we were stopped by a frontier guard patrol which did not much like the look of my British passport or the lack of an up-to-date resident permit.

Bonn set to ease citizenship laws

ABOUT four million long-term foreign residents of Germany will find it easier to gain German citizenship, according to a parliamentary Bill unveiled yesterday (Roger Boyes writes). However, candidates will have to master the German language and demonstrate that they have a clean criminal record.

The measure, which will be steered through parliament by the summer, has sparked a controversy and the Christian Democratic Opposition has taken the unusual step of launching a nationwide petition to stop or slow the legislation. The basis of German citizenship remains the 1913 blood laws in which German ancestry counts for more than

place of birth. The amended law, approved yesterday by the Cabinet, allows foreigners who have lived in Germany for at least eight years to apply for dual citizenship.

Children born in Germany

to foreigners who themselves were either born there or came to the country before the age of 14 will be given German passports automatically.

That applies to the many Turkish families who arrived in the 1960s and whose children attend German schools.

The Opposition says that

dual citizenship "encourages the creation of a parallel world in which young Turks enjoy the privileges of the European Union but keep their ethnic identity."

WORLD IN BRIEF

Japanese agree coalition deal

Tokyo: Japan's ruling party and an opposition group agreed to launch a coalition government yesterday after reaching a breakthrough in a dispute over security issues. The pact will help the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, which lacks a majority in the upper chamber of parliament, to pass Bills to revalue Japan's economy and upgrade defence ties with the US.

Keizo Obuchi, the Prime Minister, who returned yesterday from a tour of Europe, is expected to reshuffle and reduce the size of his Cabinet this afternoon and to give a post to his party's new ally, the Liberal Party. (AP)

Kabila troops 'kill 320'

Bangui: President Kabila's troops massacred at least 320 civilians last week in the northwestern Equateur province of the Democratic Republic of Congo, refugees in the Central African Republic said. They added that the provisional toll included 120 people slaughtered in Zongo and 200 at Libenge, on the border between the two countries. President Kabila's troops hold Zongo and Libenge. (AP)

B25 and crew found

Jakarta: The remains of eight American airmen killed in a B25 bomber crash in what is now Indonesia's Irian Jaya province in the Second World War have been found after more than 50 years, the US Embassy said. The wreckage was spotted in December 1995 by a pilot and has now been identified by the US Army Central Identification Laboratory. (AP)

Nine die on UN plane

Paris: None of the nine people on board a United Nations cargo aircraft survived when it crashed over an Angolan battlefield on January 2, the rebel Unita group said. The Angolan Army claims Unita shot down both the Hercules C130 plane and a similar UN aircraft that crashed on December 26 over the central plateau territory, killing all 14 inside. (AP)

Unmarried bliss

Sofia: At least 13,000 Bulgarian couples have been told they are not married after officials admitted that unqualified officials had presided at their weddings, the paper 24 Tchassa said. Two divorce petitions in the northern region of Rousse said. Two divorce petitions in the northern region of Rousse had been rejected after officials noticed that the marriages had been improperly performed, the paper added. (AP)

Britain ready to back lifting of UN oil embargo on Iraq

BY JAMES BONE IN NEW YORK AND OUR FOREIGN STAFF

BRITAIN, in a dramatic shift of policy in the aftermath of last month's Operation Desert Fox, appears ready to go along with a French proposal to lift the United Nations oil embargo on Iraq, provided adequate controls can be put on Iraq's ability to develop weapons of mass destruction.

British sources said yesterday that a trade-off was likely

in the UN Security Council in coming months between relaxing the embargo imposed after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and instituting a strict new weapons inspection regime.

Meanwhile, US warplanes patrolling the no-fly zone over northern Iraq attacked several surface-to-air missile installations yesterday after being targeted by Iraqi radar, US officials said. Iraqis fired at least

one missile but missed the aircraft, the Pentagon said. The incident underscored an increasingly aggressive Iraqi challenge to the no-fly zones enforced by US and British planes. President Saddam Hussein has nearly doubled his surface-to-air missile batteries and has been using them with increasing frequency to threaten allied pilots.

The UN's "oil for food" scheme, which allows Iraq to sell \$2.2 billion (£1.6 billion) worth of crude every six months to finance humanitarian imports, could be extended without an upper limit, British officials say. That would, in effect, lift the crippling eight-year oil embargo, while leaving in place a UN system to monitor oil exports and authorised imports of food, medicine

and other needed goods. Since Iraq cannot meet existing UN oil sales quotas because of the low price of crude, the practical effect would be small. But the political impact would be huge: Britain would be free of accusations that it is punishing the Iraqi people, while Iraq could claim success in ridng itself of the embargo.

France yesterday unveiled its proposal to lift the embargo and replace the UN Special Commission (Unscom) with an inspection regime that would monitor Iraq's weapons industries but no longer investigate its past efforts to acquire nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and the missiles to deliver them. Britain's main objection appears to be that the mechanism would not ferment out existing stocks of chemi-

cal and biological weapons and Scud missiles.

Iraq's reaction remains unclear, the Iraqi leadership having refused to talk to the French Ambassador in Baghdad. Most of the Security Council are likely to embrace the proposals, fearing that a failure to make progress diplomatically could entail fresh military conflict.

□ The Hague: Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, hinted yesterday that the UN weapons inspection team might have to accept some changes before returning, but insisted Baghdad should let them in.

Meanwhile, George Robertson, the Defence Secretary, said in Sofia that Saddam was making a "suicidal miscalculation" in continuing to target US and British warplanes.

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FROM ANNA BLUNDY IN MOSCOW

RELATIONS between Russia and America, already strained by the Allied bombing of Iraq, took a turn for the worse yesterday when Yevgeny Primakov, the Russian Prime Minister, lashed out at the US over its decision to impose sanctions on three Russian scientific institutions that it believes are helping the Iranian nuclear weapons programme. If the American accusations that Russia is providing nuclear assistance to Iran prove to be true, it would mean that Russia is contravening international agreements on non-proliferation.

The Russian Foreign Ministry, the Iranian Embassy in Moscow and all three institutions involved — the Moscow Aviation Institute, the Mendeleyev Chemical Technical University and the Scientific Research and Design Institute of Power and Technology — have dismissed the allegations.

Last July President Clinton imposed sanctions on seven other Russian bodies for the same reasons. Controls over the export of Russian technology have been tightened recently in order to meet international requirements.

"Such strong-arm methods

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CHANGING TIMES



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Follow the lead of the famous



Dr Thomas Stuttaford
reports on prostate cancer: its symptoms, advances in treatment, and their success rate

Hughes Bucket in the television series *Keeping Up Appearances* found the presence of her ageing lager-lout brother-in-law, Onslow, a constant impediment in her battle to maintain middle-class respectability. Unshaven Onslow seemed to spend much of his time wearing a vest, lying on a grubby bed and drinking cans of beer; he didn't appear to be contributing much to society.

Geoffrey Hughes, the real-life Onslow, has redressed the balance. His advocacy of measures for the early diagnosis of cancer of the prostate may save many of the 10,000 men who die from it each year, and help to bring British figures more in line with those recorded in the rest of the developed world.

Hughes has described how he attended a routine medical examination at which a trace of blood was found in his urine; apart from this he had no symptoms and the bleeding would not have been obvious without tests. Further examination — blood tests, prostate ultrasound and biopsy — confirmed the presence of prostatic cancer. The good news is that MRI scans, bone scans, and the rest of the pre-surgical regime showed that the cancer had not spread.

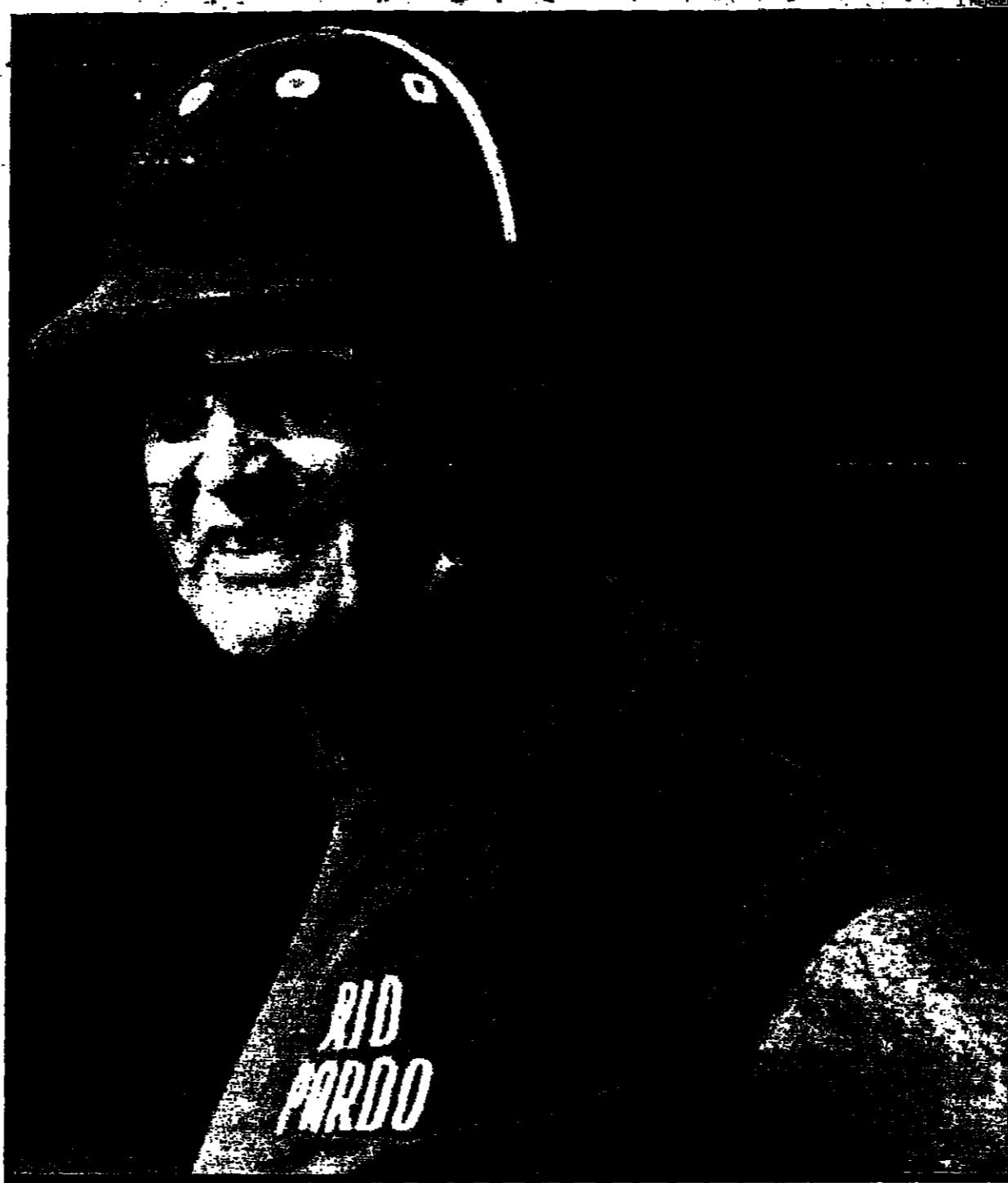
As Hughes was, in prostatic surgical terms, young — only 54 — and in sufficiently good order to withstand surgery, he opted for a radical prostatectomy, the total removal of the prostate and adjacent tissue. He was up and about within 72 hours and after a holiday in

Cancer of the prostate is an insidious disease

The third public figure to extol the benefits of early diagnosis of cancer of the prostate is Major Ron Ferguson who has also, apparently, made a good recovery.

Both Hughes and Sir Harry were symptom-free when they attended routine medicals. Their cancer was found because of tests carried out by the doctor, not because the patients were suffering from ill-health.

Cancer of the prostate is an insidious disease; by the time



Many public figures, such as Major Ron Ferguson, extol the benefits of early diagnosis of prostate cancer

it causes symptoms, which disturb the patient, there is a 50 per cent chance that it will already have spread beyond the confines of the gland, and the likelihood of a lasting cure is remote.

Patients who, for some reason, do not have regular PSA blood tests should watch for symptoms that could foretell the need for urgent intervention.

These include trouble with passing water, possibly a weakened flow, and urgency. There may be pain on ejaculation and blood in the urine or semen; potency may be less and the semen volume may be consistently reduced. In advanced cases, there will be pain from the spread of the tumour to the spine, ribs or other bones.

CHLAMYDIA IS A FACTOR IN PROSTATE PROBLEMS

IT IS not only in old age that prostates cause trouble. The number of young patients with chronic inflammation of the prostate is increasing.

The *International Journal of Clinical Practice* recently reported on a survey designed to determine what proportion of patients with chronic prostatitis (inflammation) in which no bacteria could be demonstrated were, in fact, suffering from a chlamydial infection.

Chlamydia is the organism that causes NSU (non-specific urethritis) — one of the causes of the gleet (discharge) which so worried the 17th-century diarist Samuel Pepys — in men and much of the pelvic inflammatory disease, and hence infertility, in women.

Acute or chronic prostatitis in men causes pain or discomfort on passing urine, or ejaculating, a perineal ache and often back pain. Prostatitis is frequently associated with a urethral discharge and the examination of patients includes urethral tests carried out in the morning

before urine is passed. In this particular survey, those patients who had an associated urethritis were excluded.

Prostatic fluid is collected by prostatic massage — a rather undignified and uncomfortable procedure — but one that enables a doctor to examine the fluid and check it for bacteria. More than 25 per cent of the men who had non-bacterial prostatitis could be shown to be suffering from a chlamydial infection.

They were treated with 100mg of Doxycycline twice daily for 10 days, with a cure rate of 80 per cent. This dosage is rather lower than that used at the Royal London Hospital which, when I was there, administered 300mg of the same antibiotic for three weeks.

One condition frequently mistaken for prostatitis is loin and groin pain, which results from nerve-root irritation, often from a prolapsed disc of the sacral plexus in the back. This too, gives rise to chronic pain in the genitalia, perineum, groin and inner thighs.

When symptoms are benign

THE GOOD news is that the overwhelming majority of prostate problems are benign.

Even better news is that whereas a few years ago any significant benign enlargement of the prostate was treated with surgery, now medical management with pills is an acceptable alternative in many early cases.

Nonetheless, surgery, TURP (transurethral resection of the prostate), a coring of the prostate as if it was an apple, is so routine that I have had patients who have returned to work within days.

The doctor asks a patient three questions: do you have to get up at night to pass urine? Is the flow slower than it used to be? Do you have any other bladder symptoms?

The symptoms of an enlarged prostate — benign prostatic hyperplasia — are divided into those caused by obstruction to the flow of urine away from the bladder and those caused by irritation of the bladder and urethral lining.

The prostate, a gland which secretes semen, surrounds the urethra, the tube leading away from the bladder. As the prostate gland enlarges with age — as it inevitably does — it constricts the urethra in the same way as would tightening a jubilee clip around the hose leading to a car radiator.

Classic symptoms of obstruction are a poor, intermittent stream, leaving a man standing in the loo while his colleagues are back at the bar.

THIS IS often coupled with a feeling of incomplete emptying. When there is incomplete obstruction, the condition is called acute retention. A feeble stream and incomplete emptying suggest that surgery may soon be needed.

The symptoms of irritation of the urethra and bladder are frequency, a need to get up at night and leaking on the way to the lavatory. This latter symptom is also indicative that surgery is needed.

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Cross, crusty, gentle and tough

BASIL HUME

by his friends

In November 1992 the Roman Catholic Church in Britain faced one of the biggest challenges in its post-Reformation history. The Church of England decided to ordain women and in the process sent them aside. A mass exodus followed, mainly of the Anglo-Catholic wing, and largely presented itself for reception into the Catholic Church.

The Church was hopelessly ill-prepared and Cardinal Basil Hume was faced with a diplomatic and organisational nightmare. Having publicly commented that this might be the opportunity for the reconversion of England for which we had all been praying for so long he later, uncharacteristically, made a partial retraction of the word "reconversion". Many of us thought there was no need for any retraction whatsoever. Indeed, it was that very commitment to the reconversion of England which spurred him to find a solution to what was becoming known in the Catholic Church as the "Anglican problem". He preferred to see it as the "Anglican opportunity". Perhaps, also, he saw a solution to the shrinkage of vocations in the Catholic Church.

Whatever his thoughts, it is one of Cardinal Hume's greatest achievements that the transition of Anglicans to Rome was managed without detriment either to his own Church or to long-term relations with a decidedly embarrassed and not over-gracious Canterbury. It was managed, furthermore, despite a considerable amount of resistance from the Catholic Church in England and a high degree of frustration on the part of crossing Anglicans who could not, in turn, understand the obstacles being put in their way.

Early reaction was chaotic. Some Catholic bishops gave an instant welcome to the dozens of Anglican clergy who came to see them, others repulsed them with stories of seven-year preparation periods. Some laity were received in a matter of weeks (I was myself) while others, sturdy Anglo-Catholics who were almost more Roman than those receiving them, ran into demands to take the whole RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) course, which often turned out to be run by people unqualified to deal with such pitfalls and wholly ignorant of what they already believed.

"Why do they keep talking about conversion as if we have



Defender of his faith: Ann Widdecombe says that after a private meeting with Basil Hume lasting just 15 minutes, her spiritual doubts of a lifetime were overcome

He can be enigmatic, irritable and stubborn — yet the leader of England's Roman Catholics is a man of true holiness who inspires a deep love. In the first of a series of extracts from a new book by his friends, Ann Widdecombe reveals the human side of Cardinal Basil Hume

only just put our totem poles in the dustbin?" one lady wrote to me at the time. Why indeed!

We can thank the cardinal and a small number of other determined bishops that the mess was so thoroughly sorted from so hopeless a beginning. Scores of vicars, most of whom were still ministering in the Church of England, regularly made their way down Ambrosden Avenue to attend Basil Hume's Wednesday evening talks and many of them were subsequently received into the Catholic Church by the cardinal's ecumenical adviser, Fa-

ther Michael Seed. My own spiritual journey was also completed by the cardinal. When I left the Church of England in November 1992 it was to find myself in denominational no man's land. I knew what I was rejecting, but not what I was going to.

For many years I had been attracted by the Roman Catholic Church, with its cohesion and its uncompromising stand in the face of fashionable scorn on moral issues such as abortion and divorce. I could not, however, ignore the very profound doctrinal reservations which lay between my

self and reception into the Church. All received — as opposed to cradle — Catholics have to state that they believe everything the Church teaches to be revealed truth. I did not.

After endless conversations with Michael Seed, I had resolved many but not all of these reservations. In this unhappy state I was facing an Easter still out of communion with any Church. As it happened, so were thousands of other Anglicans and it was on their behalf that I went to see the cardinal. In a quarter of an hour he removed the doubts of the exact content of the

the conversation will be forever private but it revolved around the nature of doubt and understanding. It is a pity that the cardinal cannot personally counsel 55 million people, for if he could then he would guarantee that longed-for reconversion of England.

He appears little in the media, which is doubtless why he is listened to with respect when he does; interviewers do not adopt towards him the hectoring tone often discernible with Anglican bishops.

Cardinal Hume can be cross and crusty, gentle and endearing, tough and uncompromising, sensitive and diplomatic. He hates rows. Perhaps, sometimes, he hates them too much. He can be too keen to preserve the tranquillity of the Church when it might be better served by a resignation or two.

Yet he makes his point on both elegantly, rather than emphatically, by encouraging the Church to address the issues directly, as opposed merely to berating politicians for their supposed failures. It is a style which might have given some other much-quoted churchmen greater gravitas had they seen fit to adopt it. Also has the virtue of increasing the pressure on politicians in a way that direct attacks do not.

A prophet is not without honour except in his own country, but it rare to hear Cardinal Hume criticised by ordinary members of the Church or by his own priests, other than by those who have special axes to grind. Most refer to him with personal liking, the laity talking of him with a mixture of awe and affection, his priests

with an element of teasing in their respect. Even those liberals who are exasperated with his unyielding traditionalism will often still mutter grudging compliments.

It is no mean feat, in an age

where destructive comment is the order of the day, to have inspired and retained respect over nearly a quarter of a century from politicians of all hues, a cynical press and media, the leaders of other denominations and, indeed, other religions, the monarch and his Church. It boils down to a recognition of true holiness, of a man in touch with God.

• *Basil Hume: By His Friends*, edited by Carolyn Butler. Fount Paperbacks. £8.99.

TOMORROW

Why Hume is the last loved churchman in Britain, by The Most Reverend Timothy Radcliffe, Master of the Dominican Order



George Carey — relations were said to be strained — and, right, Widdecombe the convert



EARLY in 1977, Cardinal Hume rang to tell me the Holy Ghost had "sure as Hell" come to his rescue during a potentially embarrassing interview by Robin Day. Day had asked him about the vows of celibacy and, said the cardinal: "I felt the blood drain from my body... I had no idea where this would lead. I said a quiet prayer to the Holy Ghost and waited for my inevitable execution.

"Imagine," said Day, "that you were in a crowded room and suddenly... the most beautiful woman you had ever seen walked into that room. What would your feelings be as a man — not as a bishop or a priest?"

"It was then that the Holy Ghost took a firm hold. I replied: 'Mr Day, I hope you're as happily married to your wife as I am to the Church. So the only way I can think of an-

swering your question is by inviting you to imagine yourself standing next to your beloved wife in a crowded room when suddenly the most beautiful woman you have ever seen... I didn't have to finish. There was spontaneous applause from the studio audience. I had survived. The rest of the interview was a series of half volleys outside the off-stump."

NEIL BALFOUR

Andrew Motion chooses his favourite book

MY favourite book as a child was *The Once and Future King*, by T.H. White. It offered very brilliant solutions to very difficult problems, such as how can Merlin know everything? The answer? He lives backwards. My favourite passage is when Merlin transforms the boy Arthur into different animals as part of his training. It is truly poetic. White places the boy's character into these creatures and creates poetic truthfulness. It is immensely liberating for the readers.



He is dignified in the face of attack. On one occasion he stood quietly by the altar, keeping the whole cathedral in silence, the Mass suspended, until the police came to remove a group of demonstrating homosexuals. A prolonged demonstration outside the cathedral, which lasted several weeks, of a handful of Catholics supporting the ordination of women, drew a raised eyebrow but no comment.

Those who know him say his attitude to George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, verges on the contemptuous in private, but no trace of this has ever been publicly discernible. Relations between the two denominations appear to have weathered the storm, even if the sharp reduction in the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church of England, following the loss of so many to Rome, has left them less in tune with each other. In fact, the cardinal recognises that basic faith and traditional values are best upheld not only by the remaining Anglo-Catholics, but also by the Evangelicals. He has long been an admirer of Billy Graham, attending his last mission to England for some hours.

There is more than one way for secularism to win and the cardinal fights it well in its more recognisable forms. He

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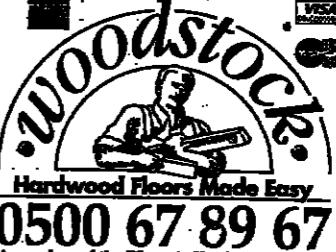
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We need care, not chemicals

Two hundred years ago, a French doctor, Philippe Pinel, removed the chains from his mental patients and began a revolution in the treatment of psychiatric illness. He dealt with them as human beings who might be cured, rather than just society's rejects. He also recognised his wardens as co-reformers. At Ashworth Hospital, in the last year of the 20th century, inmates with personality disorders, including paedophiles and sex offenders, were locked in secure accommodation where they were fed medication and pornographic videos. And this is progress?

The Ashworth report is a devastating indictment of one hospital. But it goes wider. When, in the course of the report's account of the failure of care and supervision, the phrase "therapeutic nihilism" cropped up, it told us something about the sad decline of psychiatric treatment in Britain. Once, we led the world in the notion of care rather than containment, the idea that with long-term therapy, even those suffering from psychiatric disorders might be rehabilitated.

At Ashworth, security became not just the overriding concern but the guiding principle. The very isolation that society demanded was the root of the problem. With few professional contacts in the wider field of psychiatry, and with prison training rather than developed expertise in mental care, staff began to lose sight of their objectives, to assimilate the values of inmates. They created a strange, anomalous society, a process which the American sociologist, Erving Goffman, in his book *Asylums* described as a form of inbreeding.

Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, writing to *The Times* last October, attacked the attitude of those who regarded some offenders as beyond help: "I



Magnus Linklater

think that in more recent years there are many people in the psychiatric profession who have come to the conclusion that people with psychopathic disorders are not treatable."

He urged them not to retreat into defensive mode and simply to regard their job as one of protecting the public rather than engaging in the more demanding task of rehabilitating patients. His message was right and commendable. But it comes late in the day.

As someone who has seen more than I have really wanted to be of the corridors and secure wards of one psychiatric hospital — the Royal Edinburgh — I know something of the dedication and commitment shown by those who work in this most difficult and under-appreciated area of the medical profession. But I also know about the pressures that have changed it; over the years, from a place which was once held up as the model of what a psychiatric hospital ought to be, to the soulless and depressing centre it has become today. Its wards have been upgraded, its walls brightly painted. But it is no longer a place where its inmates are nurtured, supported and helped gradually back into a state where they can once again cope with the unforgiving world outside.

This was a place built for the long-term treatment of its patients. You can still see the huge walled gardens outside where they used to work. As

comment@the-times.co.uk

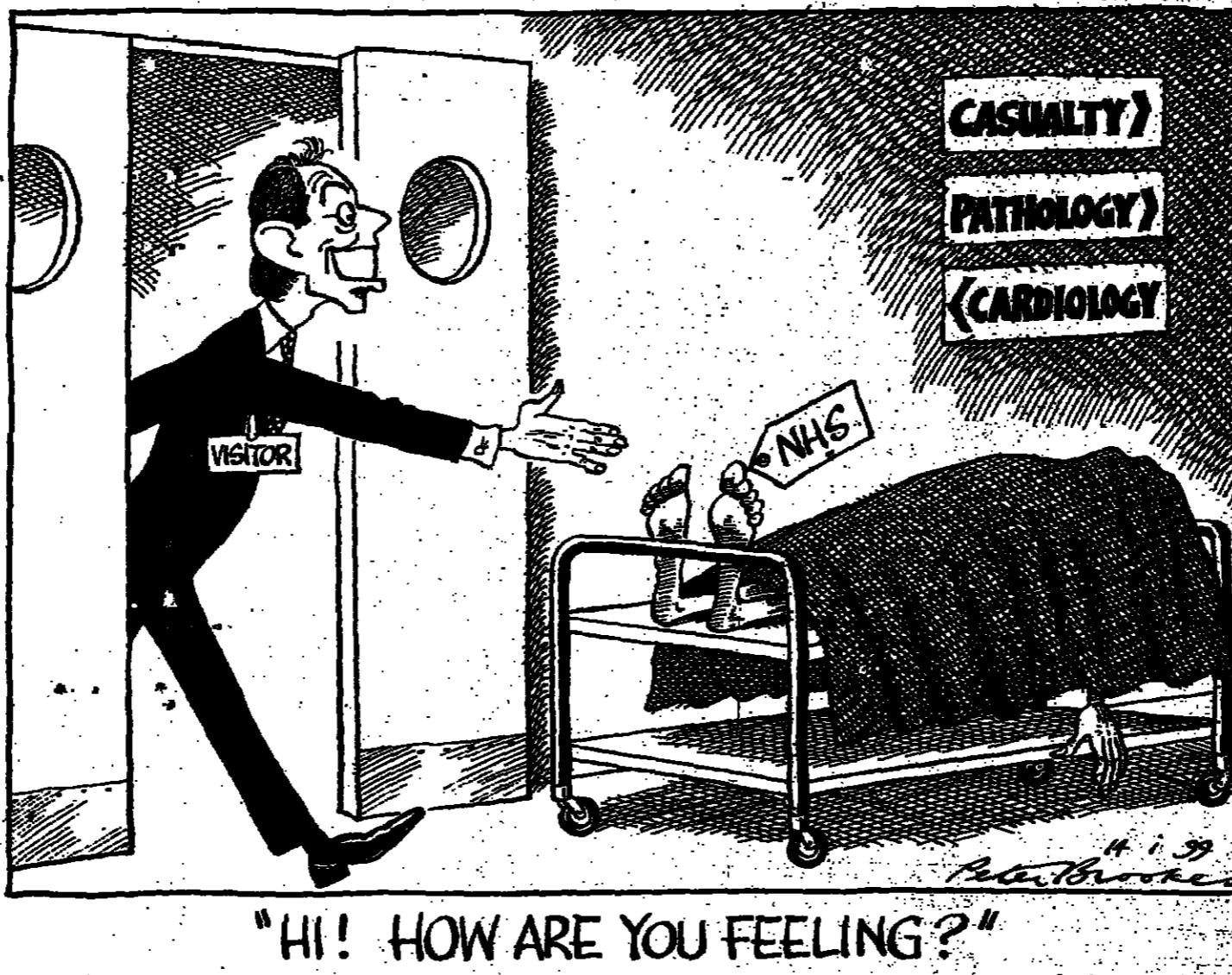
'I want to see the first human clone born in the Dome as midnight strikes for the new millennium'

By James Wright

The Millenium Dome is the arena where Coal Britannia stands trial. Will the Dome be an advertising opportunity for new Labour, or a celebration of Britain beyond Tony Blair's charmed circle?

It is very easy to be critical of new ideas such as the Dome. It takes guts and courage to be positive about them. That is why I got involved with the Millennium Youth Council, which has been advising on the project. I was genuinely excited about its potential, but the project has become too political.

The Dome has become a partisan stunt to prove how well new Labour is doing. The replacement of Peter Mandelson with the Prime Minister's old friend Lord Falconer of Thoroton has only emphasised the sur-



Home strife

FOR the first time in months a Cabinet minister is to win public sympathy: he is being threatened with a writ by his builder, Alun Michael, the Welsh Secretary, in dispute with a tailor at his home.

Alun Michael says the prospective leader of the Welsh National Assembly has not paid him: fired to do £10,000 of renovations, he was marched off the Cardiff property after Mrs Michael professed herself unsatisfied. "I felt I was being bullied," says Mary Michael. "I have seen part of his claim in full and final settlement."

• ANY Cabinet minister who has not been subjected to the Peter Mandelson charm offensive, please come forward. Tuesday night found our hero at Grand Pardiso, Pinheiros, where he shared a long and intimate dinner with his fellow home-alone Chris Smith.

Sex aide

SAFE sex. Ginger style. Geri Halliwell, the old Spice-turned UN ambassador (a pose disclosed here) is filming two videos on "safer sex" for teenagers. "Geri believes very strongly that women have the right to reproductive health and to look after themselves," says her chemist. "She is also a firm believer that



women should use the facilities we have in the West." Will Ann Widdecombe (right) approve?

• ALAN BENNETT on attending a party with Noel Coward, where Dudley Moore was hammering a piano: "What a clever young man," said Coward, "He can play on the black notes as well as the white."

Dark knight

SEAN CONNERY's exclusion from the honours list seems to have made him a trifle chippy. Connery recently played a "Sir August de Wynter", who gained his title through despicable scheming. "De Wynter is a scoundrel, a blackguard and a cheat," says Connery. "It makes you wonder what exactly are the criteria to qualify." Loyalty to the Union, perhaps?

• ARCHIE NORMAN, the penny-pinching Tory chief executive, has puzzled employees by asking them to stop using e-mail. At a cost of £60 a message, I hear Scrooge told his workforce that this would save the broke party dash — verbally, so as not to waste money.

Fitness fanatic

AMID rumours of fragile health, General Pinochet has converted his drawing room into a gym. Still



waiting for the law lords to sort their briefs out, and thought by some to be showing the early signs of Alzheimer's disease, Pinochet has started the physical jerks at his retreat in Wentworth Surrey.

According to producers of *The Real Pinochet*, a profile of the old tyrant: "He's a fitness fanatic. The iron discipline he applied to his country, he applies to himself. He was doing dozens of sit-ups."

• HAS John Major usurped the late Harold Wilson as the Queen's favourite PM? After making him a Companion of Honour, the Queen invited John and Norma to a sleep-over at Sandringham on Tuesday. It was a strange crew: Amara Sen, grouchy left-wing Master of Trinity College, Sir Michael Oswald, the director of Royal Studs, and the odd RAF buffer. The Majors were lucky to stay the night — an honour. I cannot remember being extended to Baroness Thatcher after her fall.

JASPER GERARD

دعا من الله

DIARY
Home
Strife

AN END TO ENTITLEMENT

The Government edges towards radical welfare reform

The first Prime Minister's Question Time of 1999 signalled another period of intense conflict between the major parties. Neither the exchanges on the current condition of the NHS nor the circumstances surrounding Peter Mandelson's resignation shed much light on the future direction of this administration. A more prophetic signal may have emerged before Tony Blair rose to his feet. It came in the subdued form of a departmental press release.

For the past 20 months, according to ministers, the Government has slowly but surely laid the foundations for fundamental reform of the welfare state. This process has been so protracted that, at times, it seemed unlikely that even a single-storey construction would ever be built on the site.

Mr Blair and his colleagues have not been inactive. But most of their measures have either been Green Papers which clarified key questions rather than offered bold answers or incremental moves that extended the legislation undertaken by Peter Lilley. The most dramatic innovation — the "New Deal" — which is clearly ambitious and expensive, concentrates on the young unemployed rather than the core constituents of the social security system.

The announcement by David Blunkett and Alistair Darling yesterday indicated that, having paddled at the edges of the Rubicon, the Government may be ready to cross it. The £80 million pilot programme will make state benefits for all claimants, including the disabled and single parents, dependent on timely attendance at an interview at which their eligibility for and efforts to acquire employment would be the centre of discussion. Failure to accept a reasonable offer of work would, for all but the disabled and single parents, invite the real prospect of benefit being withdrawn.

Although this particular project is based on only 12 centres covering 450,000 people over a three-year period, the forthcoming

Welfare Reform Bill would allow the Government to create a comprehensive version of this scheme in little more than a year. If American experience is reproduced even modestly in this country then these experiments are likely to lead quite swiftly to a switch in policy at the national level.

The Government has shifted emphasis towards compulsion after attempting to achieve similar results by the voluntary route. That option, closely associated with Harriet Harman, the former Social Security Secretary, has, as widely predicted, proved a disappointment in practice. There may have been virtues, at least within the Labour Party, in moving towards a tougher stance in stages. Mr Darling has rightly recognised that this is the moment for a change of approach.

The Government's commitment to work as the best possible form of welfare is admirable. If it is to be fulfilled then rules must match the rhetoric. A large number of exemptions that dilute the link between availability for interview and receipt of benefit, or between job offers and loss of benefit, would undermine the integrity of the enterprise. There is also no compelling reason why lone parents whose children have reached school age should not be expected to enter further education, training or part-time employment. This would, though, require more flexibility about the rate at which benefit is removed from those willing to undertake such positions.

The Government would be wise to seize its opportunity to be more radical still while, as the unexpected fall in unemployment yesterday demonstrated, the state of the economy cannot be used as an alibi for inaction.

If ministers expand the strategy they have outlined then welfare reform, in this sphere at least, may match or even exceed the advance publicity. This will in turn to a large degree determine the legacy of the Prime Minister and new Labour.

OUTRAGE IN COURT

Prosecutors move the goalposts to keep the Anwar case alive

For 11 weeks, Malaysian prosecutors have called witness after witness in their attempt to prove sensational allegations of "sexual misconduct and sodomy" by Anwar Ibrahim, Malaysia's sacked former Deputy Prime Minister. Every sordid detail, including DNA tests on a semen-stained mattress displayed, for added drama, in court, has been prominently reported in the country's normally staid press. In proceedings ostensibly concerned to establish whether the prosecution can establish its case against Mr Anwar for the "corrupt practice" of attempting to suppress criminal proceedings against him, this focus on alleged sexual acts has always looked more like an effort to destroy him politically by ruining his reputation as a devout Muslim than a proper concern to see justice done.

Now the prosecution has turned the questionable into the disgraceful. Yesterday, just as it was closing its case on the 45th day of these hearings, it successfully applied to move the goalposts by amending the four corruption charges. Mr Anwar is no longer accused of "directing" police to obtain statements from key prosecution witnesses to "deny sexual misconduct and sodomy committed by him". The witnesses are now said to have made such "allegations", but Mr Anwar is no longer asserted to have committed any such acts.

After the slinging of so much defamatory mud, this may appear as a moral victory, but the effect is to rescue the prosecution's case from collapse, and to put Mr Anwar at greater risk of conviction. This is because the amendments lower the burden of proof. Even if all the allegations of illegal sexual conduct — homosexual intercourse is outlawed in Malaysia — are, as is almost certain, found to be fabricated lies, he could still be convicted of trying to get them retracted and sentenced to 14 years in jail. Under Malaysian law, prosecutors have

the right to alter charges at any time before the judge's ruling. But it is appalling that Judge Augustine Paul allowed the prosecution's 11-hour retreat on the ground that "the commission of sexual misconduct and sodomy" is not really a substantive element to be proved. So substantive did the judge find this "element" earlier, that when Mr Anwar's former driver contradicted his earlier court testimony that he had been sodomised, Judge Paul refused to have that testimony ruled out of court.

As Mr Anwar put it yesterday, with understandable bitterness, "What they cannot prove ... they change." And indeed, proof has eluded the prosecution. All but one of the key witnesses have withdrawn their allegations, saying that they were tortured or suborned into making them. The head of the Special Branch, called by the prosecution, produced a report he had written to the Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in 1997, stating that the sexual allegations were groundless and "deliberately created" as part of a conspiracy. That was a year before Dr Mahathir sacked Mr Anwar as "morally unfit" to govern. And last week, the government chemist conceded that the mattress stains on which he had conducted DNA tests could have been planted by police, and that the tests could not warrant a conviction.

In this "corruption" case, there has never been any suggestion that Mr Anwar, a man reputed for integrity, has abused power for personal gain. At worst, he now stands accused of attempting to fend off a conspiracy to blacken his name and land him in prison. Even if Judge Paul — there is no jury — unexpectedly throws this case out today, the State has more charges in the pipeline. Mr Anwar's ordeal could thus endure until June at the earliest. The defence has yet to be heard. But already, Malaysian justice is in the dock.

FOSTERING COMPROMISE

The Bramleys' plea to adopt merits a fresh examination

"We are two good, honest, caring people who are willing to give up our home, family and friends and jobs to maintain Jade and Hannah's happiness." Jennifer and Jeffrey Bramley's plea to be allowed to keep the two girls they have fostered since March will provoke sympathy among many parents. On being told that they could not adopt the children, but must hand them back to Cambridgeshire social services, the Bramleys vanished, taking the girls with them. Although some may wonder whether responsible parents would subject their children to a nomadic life, this unusual, tragic case merits re-examination. If the local authority were prepared to do so, the Bramleys would be more likely to break their cover, and end the children's life on the road.

Both the Bramleys and Cambridgeshire social services claim that they are putting the interests of the children first. The authority argues that it decided to order the return of Jade and Hannah only after considerable deliberations. This case is exceptional: it is the first time in ten years that it has terminated such a placement. In hiding, the Bramleys claim the authority's decision was based on the view of "one social worker". The couple were criticised for, in their words, saying "no" and "don't".

too often to the girls. When the Bramleys tried to reverse the authority's decision in court, the judge was "prevented from reading evidence" of the girls' happiness. Many parents might conclude that, if the Bramleys are to be believed, the council is wrong to forbid two apparently loving adults from adopting children on the politically correct grounds of being too strict. Jade and Hannah's mother admits that, as her children are "a bit lively and get up to all sorts", "you do need to give them some discipline if they're naughty".

If Cambridgeshire social services have grounds for concern about the Bramleys' skills, these have yet to emerge. Mr Bramley's failure to admit that he had been in care when young was foolish, but this should not disqualify him from adopting a child. The Bramleys may well have been wrong to assume that they would be able to adopt their foster children. Fostering should not be seen as a backdoor to adoption. It was rash to devalue Jade and Hannah that the Bramleys were to be their "forever Mum and Dad" before the adoption order was made. But, in light of the Bramleys' plea, the case that they have made and the devotion they appear to have for the two girls, the authority should now offer to reopen the case.

Yours faithfully,
PETER GOLDS
II The Spinney,
Wembly, Middlesex HA0 2QS
January 4

Fairness of Senate impeachment trial

From Professor Antony Allott

Sir, Your leading article, "In Europe's name" (January 13), strings together a number of facts — some established, some unproven — to launch an attack on the European Commission. It quotes the figure of £3 billion estimated by the European Court of Auditors as not properly accounted for. But according to the court, more than 90 per cent of the irregularities are due to national authorities, not the Commission.

Under the rubric of "due process", everyone is entitled to a fair trial by an impartial tribunal; no one shall be compelled to incriminate him or herself by entrapment or otherwise.

Everyone is entitled to these safeguards, even a President; no one is to be denied the equal protection of the Constitution.

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The senators who will act as a so-called jury will have through their public pronouncements already pre-judged the case and revealed their prejudices. The vast publicity over the past months given to every detail, relevant or irrelevant, which incriminates the President renders the selection of an open-minded jury impossible.

In every other proceeding, if the position were similar, the case would be thrown out in *limine*, whatever the gravity of the charges, because of the impossibility of selecting an impartial jury, and never come to trial. Counsel for the President should take a preliminary objection to the fairness of the proceedings, irrespective of the merits of the charges.

It would go to restoring the credibility of the American judicial system if the presiding Chief Justice were to accede to this challenge.

Yours faithfully,
ANTONY ALLOTT,
Sorbrook Mill, Bodicote,
Oxfordshire OX15 4AU.
January 11

From Margaret Countess Attlee

Sir, Although we are understandably bemused, we mustn't be too hard on the US Congress.

Three hundred and fifty years ago, on January 20, 1649, the trial of Charles I commenced — instigated by republicans. The King refused to recognise the court and a plea of guilty was entered on his behalf.

The question of witness arose. The republicans wanted evidence to be heard, to justify their having taken their King to trial. In the event, unable to call witnesses because of the plea of guilty, they appointed a committee to sit in private, separate from the trial, to hear testimonies against the King. These depositions were then read out in public.

Had there been a 17th-century World Wide Web, no doubt the republicans would have published the evidence on the Internet.

Yours faithfully,
MARGARET ATTLEE,
42 Wildcroft Manor,
Putney Heath, SW15 3TT.
January 9

From Professor David Lowenthal

Sir, Comparisons of Clinton's impeachment trial with Andrew Johnson's are premature, but *The Times* does scant justice to the earlier defendant.

Johnson was no more "accidental" than President Harry Truman, and for Tim Hames to term him "low-born and uncouth" (report, "Johnson 'was not fit for the doghouse", January 8) defames an able and talented patriot, impeached on largely trivial charges for blatantly partisan reasons. Indeed, six years after leaving the White House Johnson was re-elected to the US Senate, with non-partisan support.

The instrument of Johnson's survival from impeachment, Senator Edmund Ross of Kansas, did not destroy his own political career (leading article, January 9) but only deflected it. Switching to the Democratic Party, Ross was made Governor of New Mexico and later head of the Immigration Bureau by President Grover Cleveland in the 1880s and 1890s.

American party politics were once more flexibly lenient than they have since become.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID LOWENTHAL,
55 Crown Street,
Harrow on the Hill HA2 0HR.
January 9

Smoot of Ute

From Mr Peter Golds

Sir, Your "salient story" on Senator Reed Smoot (leading article, December 28) has an additional resonance for the millennium as the US Senate considers the activities of President Clinton.

In 1902 the Senate sat for some time debating whether to admit the Mormon Senator Reed Smoot who had been appointed to it by the Utah Legislature on that it's admission to the Union.

Eventually a Senate stalwart observed his colleagues and pointed out that the body included numerous "monogamists who did not monogam" and could therefore admit "3 polygamists who did not polyg".

Perhaps the current Senate should remember this.

Yours faithfully,
PETER GOLDS
II The Spinney,
Wembly, Middlesex HA0 2QS
January 4

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. Telephone 0171-782 5000

Commission accused on Europe's missing millions

From Mr Geoffrey Martin

Sir, Your leading article, "In Europe's name" (January 13), strings together a number of facts — some established, some unproven — to launch an attack on the European Commission. It quotes the figure of £3 billion estimated by the European Court of Auditors as not properly accounted for. But according to the court, more than 90 per cent of the irregularities are due to national authorities, not the Commission.

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Yours faithfully,
GEOFFREY MARTIN
(Head of the Representation in the UK),
The European Commission,
8 Storey's Gate, SW1P 3AT.
January 13

Dismissing the nine ongoing and new Commission reforms announced by President Santeer this week as "a few German-made bones of accountability" is to divert attention from the question that ought to be asked: how current deficiencies can be tackled.

Yours truly,
ALAN SMITH
(President,
Dawson International plc),
Ardgairne House, Cleish,
By Kinross, Kinross-shire KY13 7LG.
January 13.

Commission accused on Europe's missing millions

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(President,
Dawson International plc),
Ardgairne House, Cleish,
By Kinross, Kinross-shire KY13 7LG.
January 13.

Commission accused on Europe's missing millions

office only for so long? Eventually, and hopefully before too long, they will be thrown out of office.

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COURT CIRCULAR

SANDRINGHAM HOUSE
January 12: The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh gave a Dinner Party.

The following were invited: The Rt Hon John Major and Mrs Major, Professor, and Mrs Ananya Sen, Dr, and Mrs David Livesey, Sir Michael and Lady Angela Oswald and Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Craig of Radley and Lady Craig.

ST JAMES'S PALACE
January 13: The Prince of Wales, Colonel in Chief, Army Air Corps, this morning received Brigadier Peter McQuillan upon relinquishing the appointment of Director Army Aviation, and Brigadier Colin Sibun upon assuming the position.

Today's royal engagements

The Princess Royal will present Warwickshire's tenth anniversary Business Awards at the Royal Institution, Birmingham Street, London W1, at 10.20 as President of the Patrons, Crime Concern, will attend a Neighbourhood Safety Partnership luncheon at Claridge's at noon; and as patron, British Quality Foundation, will attend a founder members reception at St James's Palace at 6.45.

Leonard Cheshire Lecture
Lord Putman delivered the Leonard Cheshire Lecture at Stationers' Hall, London, EC4, last night. Mr Jonathan Dimbleby and Sir David Goodall, Chairman of Leonard Cheshire, also spoke. Among those attending were:

Sir Patrick Walker (Leonard Cheshire International Chairman), Mr Bryan Dutton (Director General, Leonard Cheshire), Mr Ronald Travers (Leonard Cheshire Golden Jubilee Chairman), Mr David Grayson (Chairman of the National Disability Council), Mr Richard Guch (Chief Executive, Arthritis Care), Mr Bill Mason (Director, RADAR), Mr Bill McConnell (Chairman, UKHCA), the Hon Sir Peter Ramsbotham, Ms Sue Sayer (Chief Executive, United Response) and Mr James Strachan (Chief Executive, RNID).

Luncheons

Wales and Cheshire Circuit
The Leader, Mr Christopher Patten, QC, gave a luncheon in the Middle Temple on Saturday, January 9, 1999, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the call to the Bar in 1949 of the Right Hon Sir Tasler Watkins, QC. Those present included:

Sir Tasler and Lady Watkins, His Honour John River and His Honour Charles Pritchard, who were also called to the Bar in 1949, the Recorder, Circuit Judge, Michael Gibson, QC, His Honour Michael Evans, QC, and past and present Presiding Judges, Leaders and Treasurers of the Circuit and their wives.

Wax Chandlers' Company
The Lord Mayor, accompanied by

BUCKINGHAM PALACE
January 13: The Princess Royal this morning presented The Institution of Incorporated Engineers Young Woman Engineer of the Year Award 1998 at The Royal Society of Arts, 8 John Adam Street, Westminster, London.

Her Royal Highness, President, Royal Yachting Association, this afternoon attended a Luncheon at the London International Boat Show, Earl's Court Exhibition Centre, Warwick Road, South Kensington, London.

The Princess Royal, President, British Knitting and Clothing Export Council, this evening attended the British Apparel Export Awards at The Royal Lancaster Hotel, Lancaster Terrace, Westminster, London.

The Princess Royal, President, British Knitting and Clothing Export Council, this evening attended the British Apparel Export Awards at The Royal Lancaster Hotel, Lancaster Terrace, Westminster, London.

Mr Alderman and Sheriff Gavin Arthur and the Common Cryer and Sergeant-at-Arms, was the guest of honour at a luncheon given by the Master, Wardens and Court of Assistants of the Wax Chandlers yesterday at Wax Chandlers' Hall. During the luncheon the Master, Declarative Commander Nicholas Valley, RN, presented cheques to the Lord Mayor in support of his charity appeal for Leuka 2000 and to Miss Alison Kabane, Headmistress of St Albin's School, Holborn, for her after-school club.

The Lord Mayor presented the Wax Chandlers' Prize to Wing Commander Thomas Salter for the best paper submitted to the British Beekeepers' Association in their 1998 senior examination.

Royal Regiment of Wales

To mark the 150th anniversary of the action at Chillianwallah, during the First Sikh War, a ceremony of remembrance was held at the memorial of the Royal Regiment of Wales (2/4th/4th Foot) in the grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea yesterday.

Nine years after Sotheby's sold the Whymers' Renoir — *Al Moulin de la Galette* — for a record £45 million (against an estimated £30 million) the estate will be dispersed in a series of six



Seurat's *L'Île de la Grande Jatte*, above, and *Le Journal*, by Picasso, two of the Whitney paintings coming up for sale

Art collection sale set to top £50m

BY DALYA ALBERGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

MASTERPIECES by Cézanne and Seurat are among an extraordinary collection of Impressionist and modern art, once described as among the finest private hands, that is expected to fetch more than \$80 million (£50 million) at auction this spring.

The works were acquired by the late John Hay "Jock" Whitney, the American Ambassador, publisher and venture capitalist, and his wife, the late Betsy Cushing Whitney. Both were major philanthropists and benefactors, giving away important paintings to museums and galleries and supporting medical charities and hospitals.

Nine years after Sotheby's

salied the Whymers' Renoir — *Al Moulin de la Galette* — for a record £45 million (against an estimated £30 million) the estate will be dispersed in a series of six



sales in New York between April and May. The proceeds will cover "state taxes and other obligations," according to the auction house.

Cézanne's Rêveuse, Cruchon et Compotier, a still life of 1893-94, is estimated to fetch between \$25 million and \$35 million. Charles Moffett, co-director of Sotheby's worldwide department of Impressionist and modern art, described it as "one of the greatest still lifes by one of the greatest still-life painters of all time." It is, he added, one of the most important Cézannes to appear at auction in recent years. The Whitneys had acquired it nearly 50 years ago.

The Seurat is *L'Île de la Grande Jatte*, which carries the same estimate as the Cézanne. Mr Moffett said: "It is the only major image relating to Seurat's most famous work that remains in

private hands. It is one of two large, final works that are preparatory to *Un Dimanche à la Grande Jatte* in the Art Institute of Chicago."

The art historian John Rus-

sell once wrote: "This was the collection of two people who did not collect to impress, to fill galls, or to hoard. They collected what touched them directly."

Birthdays today

Captain Sir Alastair Aird, Private Secretary to Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, 88; Professor Sir Melville Arnott, cardiologist, 90; Mr Peter Birkworth, actor, 70; Mr Richard Briers, actor, 65; Baroness Brooke of Ystradfellte, 91; Baroness Byford, 88; Lord Catto, 76; The Earl of Drogheda, 62; Miss Faye Dunaway, actress, 62; Lord Ellenborough, 73; Miss Maine Gielgud, ballerina, 54; Miss Andre Greipel, former managing director, Glemby International, 59; Miss Sophie Harley, fashion designer, 34; Sir Martin Holdgate, president, Zoological Society of London, 68; Professor Sir Hans Kornberg, FRS, former Master, Christ's College, Cambridge, 71; Mr John Lever, Headmaster, Canford School, Dorset, 47; Mr Warren Mitchell, actor, 73; Lieutenant-

Colonel Nigel J. Newman, Chaplain, St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, 57; Mr Trevor Nunn, artistic director, National Theatre, 59; Sir Neil Pritchard, former diplomat, 88; Mr C.R. Reeves, barrister, 63; Sir Vernon Seacombe, former chairman, Plymouth Portman's Brokers, 93; Mrs Hazel Williams, TRU, 73; Mrs John Woodcock, former HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, 67; Mr Roy Young, chief executive, Scottish Southern Energy, 55.

Thanksgiving

John Schneider
A service of thanksgiving for the life of John Schneider will be held at Holy Trinity, Brompton, London SW7, at 2pm on Thursday, January 21, 1999. All welcome.

Anniversaries

BIRTHS John Biddle, Unitarian Wootton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire, baptised this day, 1615.

Benedict Arnold, American general and traitor, Connecticut, 1741.

Matthew Maury, hydrographer, Pennsylvania, Virginia, 1806.

Lieutenant-Colonel John Russell, painter, Grenoble, 1836.

Colonel Nigel J. Newman, Chaplain, St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, 57; Mr Trevor Nunn, artistic director, National Theatre, 59; Sir Neil Pritchard, former diplomat, 88; Mr C.R. Reeves, barrister, 63; Sir Vernon Seacombe, former chairman, Plymouth Portman's Brokers, 93; Mrs Hazel Williams, TRU, 73; Mrs John Woodcock, former HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, 67; Mr Roy Young, chief executive, Scottish Southern Energy, 55.

Anthony Eden, 1st Earl of Avon, Prime Minister, 1955-57, Salisbury, 1977; Peter Finch, actor, Los Angeles, 1977.

The 1998 London Frost Fair was held, 1998.

The first demonstration of Alexander Graham Bell's telephone was made to Queen Victoria at Osborne House, Isle of Wight, 1876.

Meeting Royal Institute of International Affairs

Richard J. Goldstone of the Constitutional Court of South Africa was the speaker at a meeting of the Royal Institute of International Affairs held last night at Chatham House, London.

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Meeting of the Royal Institute of International Affairs

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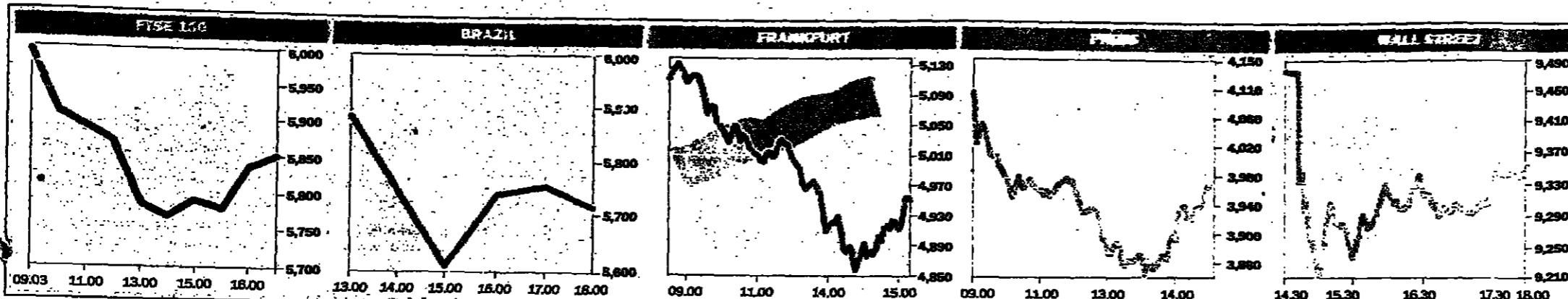
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THURSDAY JANUARY 14 1999

Investors take cover as Latin American crisis deepens



Shares dive as Brazil devalues

By ALASDAIR MURRAY AND OLIVER AUGUST

INTERNATIONAL financial markets suffered heavy losses yesterday after Brazil's decision to devalue its currency revived fears of a Latin American financial crisis.

Shares in London and other European markets fell sharply while the dollar took a battering on the foreign exchanges. But shares on Wall Street compounded expectations of heavy losses with early falls restricted by some heavy retail buying.

The US is regarded as especially vulnerable to a Brazilian crisis because it supplies about 20 per cent of its total exports to the world's eighth-largest economy.

The market turmoil was triggered by the unexpected resignation of Gustavo Franco, President of the Brazilian Central Bank, and the man regarded as the architect of Brazil's high exchange-rate policy. His resignation was immediately followed by the announcement that Brazil was lowering its exchange-rate band.

Brazil's decision to ditch the central point of its anti-inflation strategy raised fears that capital could spread to other Latin American countries, prompting a re-run of the financial crisis which engulfed the region a year ago.

Details by Francisco Lopes, the newly appointed Central bank head, traders said the widening of the currency bands to between 1.20 and 1.32 real to the dollar amounted to a *de facto* devaluation. The real immediately dipped to the outer limits of this new band before the Central Bank intervened to prop the currency up at about 1.30 to the dollar.

Traders predicted, however, that with speculative pressure mounting Brazil may devalue again today and said that further moves could leave the Hong Kong dollar vulnerable to renewed speculation.

Trading in the Brazilian stock market was suspended after shares fell 10 per cent within moments of opening. However, stocks later recovered to stand down about 3 per cent amid persistent rumours of government intervention.

In London the FTSE 100 index closed down 183.5 points at 550.1, the fourth-largest points fall ever. At one stage, the market was some 260 points lower before a slightly better than expected performance on Wall Street helped to spur a partial recovery.

In New York the Dow Jones industrial average fell 250 points in the first hour of trading but recovered to a loss of between 50 points and 100 points

in afternoon trading, clearing the 9,400 barrier again.

The unexpectedly robust performance was attributed to the continued eagerness of US retail investors to plough money into the stock market.

The dollar, however, fell sharply in the currency markets with investors opting for the pound and the euro as perceived "safe havens". The dollar closed down over two cents against the pound at \$1.6522 while falling from \$1.1575 to \$1.1700 against the euro.

Other European stock markets also clocked up huge losses with Frankfurt 4.1 per cent down and Paris ending 3.5 per cent lower. Spanish shares, which are regarded as having the greatest exposure to Brazil, fell 7 per cent, with banking stocks losing up to 14 per cent.

The Brazilian Government and Senhor Franco have repeatedly denied their intention to devalue. However, Senhor Franco said in his resignation speech that he now accepted the need for a more flexible currency and the need to reduce the country's cripplingly high interest rates of 36 per cent.

The latest crisis was triggered by the decision last week of Minas Gerais, Brazil's second-largest state, to order a 90-day moratorium on debt payments.



Brazilian dealers wait nervously during a delay in trading and listen to a speech by the new central bank president

Unemployment falls to lowest level in 18 years

By ALASDAIR MURRAY, ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

UNEMPLOYMENT fell in December to reach its lowest level in 18 years, lifting hopes that Britain will avoid a major recession.

The figures, however, took the City by surprise and left economists warning that the Bank of England may reconsider its rate-cutting strategy.

The Bank had indicated after the rate cut earlier this month that it was now confident that labour market pressures were easing.

The claimant count measure of unemployment declined by 14,000 to 1.31 million, the lowest level of unemployment since July 1980. The Government's preferred International Labour Organisation measure of unemployment also slipped by 26,000 in the three months to November to total 1.79 million.

Other labour market measures showed a surprising strength with employment growth measuring 98,000 in

Cuny leaves top job at BPB

By CARL MORTISHED

JEAN-PIERRE CUNY is leaving the top job at BPB, the plasterboard group, adding another company to a long list of troubled firms that have lost their chief executives.

BPB, which was raised by the European Commission in November in an inquiry into suspected price fixing, said yesterday that M. Cuny, 58, was taking early retirement.

A statement from the company read: "In the light of the current investigation into the alleged infringement of Article 85 of the Treaty of Rome within the European gypsum industry, it would be appropriate for a new CEO to take the group forward."

David Leonard, 60, the chief operating officer, will defer his planned retirement by up to one year to fill the empty seat on the board. M. Cuny will be retained in a consultancy basis during the investigation.

A spokesman said he would be paid £20,000 plus £1,500 for each day's work.

Germany and France warn ECB on rates

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

FRANCE and Germany yesterday turned up the heat on the newly created European Central Bank, publishing a joint memorandum advocating exchange rate "guidelines" and a cut in European interest rates.

Oskar Lafontaine, Finance Minister, and his French counterpart, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, also continued to push tax harmonisation, urging European governments to give up their tax policy veto in the drive for greater economic co-operation.

Herr Lafontaine and M. Strauss-Kahn warned the ECB they would consider laying down "general guidelines" for exchange rates if ECB policy resulted in a rapid rise in the euro.

"Market participants should know that we would not welcome an excessive rise in the euro," the two ministers said.

However, Herr Lafontaine has softened his exchange rate stance since the autumn with

the memorandum containing no mention of his proposals for global "currency zones".

The two Governments also maintained pressure on the ECB over interest rate policy, calling for a more expansionist policy and warning about the risks of deflation.

"The central bank must not adopt a restrictive stance to fight inflation and, if unit labour costs fall, as they have done recently, then interest rates should be cut to prevent deflation," the memorandum said.

Wim Duisenberg, President of the ECB, has repeatedly said that interest rates are likely to remain unchanged for the foreseeable future.

Exchange rate and interest rate policy remain the sole preserve of the European Central Bank and analysts were sceptical that the Franco-German memorandum would make much difference to policy.

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Green seeks support for Sears bid

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM
RETAIL CORRESPONDENT

PHILIP GREEN, the entrepreneur who has been laying seige to Sears, was last night seeking support from shareholders in the troubled retail group for a hostile bid at 340p a share.

The bid, which would depend on the support of Phillips & Drew, which holds 24 per cent of Sears, could be launched as early as today. P&D, which has to date backed the existing Sears management, refused to comment yesterday.

Sears continued its attempts to evade

takeover yesterday by announcing that it has sold its credit card business for £41 million, and will be returning £215 million (14p a share) in cash to shareholders. It previously said it would return £84 million.

The sale, to Groupe Cofinoga and Banque Nationale de Paris, and the expectation that Mr Green might go hostile, sent shares in Sears up 25p to 310p.

Sears appeared to have softened its position on the sale of Freemans, the catalogue business that Sir Bob Reid, its chairman, had insisted he would merge. A sale for £150 million would al-

low Sears to return a further 100p a share, making a total of 240p.

Mr Green indicated before Christmas that he might offer 340p for the group, but that it was conditional on due diligence. Sir Bob said yesterday that this undervalued the assets. He said that the property that Sears is currently selling will be worth another 100p a share, equalling Mr Green's total even before Sears' clothing businesses are taken into account. The clothing businesses are Warehouse, Wallis, Richards, and Adams children's wear.

Sears also revealed yesterday that

like-for-like sales in the clothing division declined 1 per cent in the second half to January 9 by 1 per cent. Free men's like-for-like sales declined by 5 per cent.

Selfridges, the department store business demerged from Sears last year, said that it had a 3.2 per cent rise in like-for-like sales in the six weeks to January 9. It was helped by perfume and cosmetic sales which rose 12 per cent, while men's clothing sales slipped 1 per cent and women's clothing sales were flat.

Commentary, page 27

Pressure mounts on Post Office over buy

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY
INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

THE Government yesterday faced growing controversy over the Post Office's first overseas purchase as concern mounted over the secrecy surrounding the deal and the amount of public money involved.

The Post Office will not say how much it paid for German Parcel — although the figure is thought to be up to £375 million — and neither it nor the Government will say how much public money is being spent.

Ian McCartney, minister with responsibility for the Post Office, told MPs they could work out the cost of the fourth biggest German parcel company from its sales — expected to be £265 million this year — and its other interests, which include 23 per cent of shares in a franchise business working in 30 countries. But that was no more information than the Post Office gave at the time of the deal.

However, a valuation of a business crucially depends on comparator companies and the profitability of the organisation, which is not being disclosed. Mr McCartney told the Commons that he understood concerns that the Post Office should be accountable for its purchases. He added: "I would stress that other publicly and privately owned European post offices are making acquisitions. We do not know how much they are paying to most instances."

TNT, the rival Dutch distribution business, demanded equal treatment. Anthony Lock, marketing manager, said: "The British Post Office should be at least as accountable as us. We need a level playing field in order to guarantee transparency."

UPS is challenging a similar undisclosed purchase by Deutsche Post at the European Commission. If successful it is likely to go on to challenge the UK Post Office.

Richard Page, Conservative spokesman on the Post Office, condemned the way the Government had given the Post Office more commercial freedom while keeping it in public ownership as a "policy fudge".

A spokeswoman for the Department of Trade and Industry said some details of the German deal would be reported in the Post Office's accounts, which are submitted to the Government. However, she said they were likely to be vague.



Three Chinese soldiers were among the first people to try out furniture at a new IKEA store in Beijing, which was officially opened yesterday. It is IKEA's second

in China after its Shanghai store opened last year. The Swedish furniture manufacturer aims to expand in Russia, where it has plans for Moscow and St Petersburg, and Asia. Last year Anders Moberg, chief executive, said the company had to alter its methods for the Chinese market to reflect the fact

that most Chinese live in very small apartments. The company says its mission is to make furniture for people who want to "create a better life".

Lucent Technologies agrees \$20bn takeover of Ascend

FROM OLIVER AUGUST
IN NEW YORK

LUCENT TECHNOLOGIES has agreed to buy Ascend, the manufacturer of phone switching equipment for \$20 billion (£12.3 billion) in a deal that could trigger further industry consolidation.

In the two years since the group was spun off by AT&T, Lucent has initiated 18 takeovers in an effort to outflank its rival Cisco, the \$150 billion Internet hardware maker.

Fuelled by takeovers and the exploding interest in Internet technology, Lucent's share

price has doubled since October going from \$50 to \$100.

Lucent currently has a market value of \$136 billion and will vault past Cisco once the Ascend deal is approved and completed.

Each share of Ascend will be converted into 0.825 Lucent shares under the merger agreement. Wall Street welcomed the deal but gave warning of risks.

Analysts predict that Lucent could reshape the future of the market for telecommunications equipment. It is currently being besieged by phone companies who are hurriedly

trying to add Internet capabilities to their networks.

Lucent is one of the oldest suppliers of the traditional equipment used by phone companies. The combination will be far Lucent's biggest acquisition to date.

Analysts also said that one of the problems that Lucent faces is retaining staff. In the wake of previous acquisitions, key staff at the acquired companies have left soon afterwards and made integrating the businesses difficult.

Ascend was formed in 1989, and first made a name for itself with a product called a re-

mote access concentrator.

That device, which cost tens of thousands of dollars, allowed hundreds or even thousands of remote computers to connect to a network over telephone lines.

Previously, each of those lines had required a separate modem to make a link, and the breakthrough by Ascend made the company a fixture and force in the market.

In 1997 Ascend significantly broadened its product line with the \$3.7 billion purchase of Cascade Communications, which made a line of high-speed networking gear using a

technology called Asynchronous Transfer Mode, or ATM.

Bob Bellman, an analyst with Brooktrax Research, said: "Lucent needs the gear and the credibility in the market that Ascend can bring them. But I don't know if they can pull it off. Lucent is such a big company; it may just eat up Ascend and not produce very much."

Daniel Briere, an analyst at Telechoice, said: "The perception is that it is going a lot better than people had expected. There's a good culture fit."

Icebox, page 29

BAA records recovery in Asian traffic

AIR traffic to Asia is recovering from its collapse at the beginning of last year, as East Asian economies begin to recover and tourists take advantage of the fall in local currencies (Carl Mortishaw writes).

Figures reported yesterday by BAA show a 4.8 per cent rise in traffic on Far East services.

Overall, BAA's airports experienced a 7.7 per cent gain in passenger numbers over December 1997.

Traffic for the full year in 1998 was up 7 per cent to a record 110.6 million passengers. Stansted is still BAA's fastest-growing airport, with 41 per cent more passengers than in December 1997.



David Field, marketing director of BAA, sees the delivery of new transit trains at Stansted

Major withdraws from B&B board campaign

BY CAROLINE MERRELL

STEPHEN MAJOR, the carperagger trying to force the Bradford & Bingley to become a bank, has unexpectedly withdrawn his nomination to be elected to the board.

However, a resolution put forward by Mr Major proposing Bradford & Bingley's flotation, which would result in an estimated £1,000 windfall to each of the society's 25 million members, will be voted on at the society's annual meeting in April.

Mr Major, 35, a quantity surveyor turned plumber who

lives in Co Antrim, said he had withdrawn his board nomination because he feared that he would be subjected to too much public scrutiny.

He said: "I think that everyone would have concentrated on me rather than on the resolution." Mr Major said he had already been stung by comments casting doubt on his surveyor's qualifications.

He said he wanted the society to convert because he felt that it was a route that Christopher Rodrigues, its chief executive,

Commentary, page 27

Liffe trades fall as dealers pick Eurex

BY RICHARD MILES

TRADING volumes on Liffe, the international futures and options exchange, fell 7 per cent last year as dealers switched their allegiance to Eurex, a rival trading system based in Frankfurt.

A 37 per cent increase in the daily trading of short-term interest rate contracts (Stirs) failed to offset a considerable loss of business in German bond futures during the second half of 1998.

On a more positive note, the value of average daily trades rose 22 per cent to £220 billion,

a record performance that reflected the exchange's growing dependence on Sir contracts as the level of bond business diminished.

Liffe has lost ground to Eurex because of its determination until last year to stick with open outcry trading, even though electronic dealing is not only less expensive, but permits firms to carry out business remotely.

The exchange introduced its own version of screen-based trading for equity options, Liffe Connect, at the end of November.

IPC to shed 600 jobs in shake-up

BY RAYMOND SNOODY
MEDIA EDITOR

IPC Magazines, the UK's biggest consumer magazine publisher, yesterday announced a radical restructuring and about 20 redundancies designed to save £6 million a year.

The changes, coming a year after the £850 million management buyout from Reed Elsevier backed by Cinven, followed a review of the business.

Each of the five IPC publishing groups — women's weeklies, TV weeklies, South Bank country and leisure, and music and sport, will become separate subsidiaries with their own boards and budgets. The aim, said Mike Mathew, chief executive, was to help to make the group "more entrepreneurial and free of foot".

Most of the redundancies are expected to come from the ranks of middle management.

"We are trying to focus as much as possible away from the fighting troops, the ad sales force and the journalists," said Mr Mathew, who conceded however he could not guarantee there would be no journalist or advertising job losses.

The restructuring will cost about £5 million but IPC believes that annualised savings of £6 million will be achieved. The IPC titles range from *Country Life* and *Loaded* to *TV Times* and *Marie Claire*.

Changes at Paribas

PARIBAS, the French financial group, often criticised by analysts for having a complicated and unwieldy structure, said it was reorganising in an effort to improve profitability. Paribas said it was bringing together its different activities into four core business lines. Paribas Principal Investments (PPI), its own industrial investment holdings, would be separated from its core investment banking business. The four core business lines will be investment banking, property investments, asset management and retail financial services.

EasyJet's first profit

EASYJET, the low-price airline, yesterday reported its first profit on a 65 per cent increase in passengers. For the year to September 30, pre-tax profit was £2.32 million, from a loss of £3.2 million last time. The airline flew 1.7 million passengers and reported a turnover of £71 million, up 67 per cent. EasyJet said that Internet bookings have risen to 40 per cent of total bookings during promotional periods. The airline is to take on eight new Boeing 737-300s, boosting its fleet strength to 20. Another 15 Boeing aircraft, 737-700s, will join in late 2000.

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Is this the beginning of the end for the bull market? The FTSE 100 staggered back from its biggest ever points fall but was still left looking groggy. That events in Brazil could trigger such drastic reactions in the world's stock markets highlighted what the bears have been bellowing for many months: prices are horrifically fragile, the levels unsatisfactory on any previously known criteria and a fall inevitable.

Brazil's precarious financial predicament has been a dark cloud on the world's investment screens for many months. Yesterday it took on a more defined and threatening shape and cast shadows from Latin America onto the United States, and thence Europe. The prospect of the US economy succumbing to reality is the one that brought the UK market up with more of a start than the fallout in the Far East or Russia could ever have done. This was worse than the summer slip back or the ructions over Long Term Capital Management. This time, investors were genuinely scared.

And with good reason. Never mind the irrational exuberance which perturbed the Federal Reserve's Alan Greenspan, plain irrational is what best describes the current stock market ratings. While a superficial glance will say that the FTSE 100 is showing a moderate gain on a year ago, that has been achieved largely thanks to the extraordinary

performance of pharmaceuticals and telecoms shares. The latter have more than doubled since the beginning of last year, and they did not start from a lowly base.

Those who would believe that the stock market would continue powering onwards and upwards cannot find justification in such old fashioned ideas as earnings. As companies which have yet to turn a profit power into the FTSE, the optimists are reduced to quoting the "weight of money" argument. Institutions have oodles of cash flowing into their coffers and they have to put it somewhere, goes the argument. But it is flawed. Already the institutions are shunning small cap stocks in favour of the biggest FTSE companies: the small cap index has come nowhere near regaining its peak of last spring, and is still around 25 per cent below it.

If they are already confining themselves to investing in only a few stocks, there must be a point at which the institutions admit to being over-weight in them. At that stage – and it must be imminent – they just have to find somewhere else to put the cash. There is little to suggest that they

will opt for other stocks and property may, once again, attract more attention.

When a business such as Dixons can have its shares so favourably re-rated on the basis that it is giving away Internet access, it is time to call a halt to such stock market madness. The Internet may be exciting but investing institutions, and, more importantly, their savers, cannot afford to ignore fundamentals.

Hard lesson in cash Creation

Has Sir Bob Reid found enough cash to buy him the shareholders' support? It is isolating what positive effects the hot breath of a bidder can have, even on those who, like Sir Bob, prefer to deny the existence of such a phenomenon. So yesterday Sir Bob chalked up a first in producing a deal that actually exceeded market expecta-

tions. But while the looming presence of Philip Green may have turned the former rail chief into a consummate deal-doer and whizzy retailer, even the most ardent believer in the Second Coming would have to accept that the odds are not encouraging.

Sir Bob has achieved a good price for Creation, Sears's credit card business, and he will shovel it out to shareholders as quickly as he can. Long-suffering Sears investors could grab the 14p a share and aim to put it somewhere rather safer than Sears has been. That, however, would still leave them to put their faith in Sir Bob to either demerge or sell Freemans and squeeze a better return out of the retail chains that remain in the group. Given that Freemans is but a leaflet-sized version of the catalogue business it once was – sales down a further 5 per cent. Sir Bob admitted yesterday – the price must be heading south even if he could find a buyer. To

attempt the promised demerger would seem to pose a daunting task for the most adventurous prospectus writer.

Similarly, the retail chains have seen sales slipping backwards. Life is tough in the high street and there is little reason to think that it is going to get any easier for the next couple of years. Sir Bob may contend that Sears is worth well over the 340p that Philip Green has proposed but, if Mr Green puts his cash on the table, shareholders will have to weigh up whether they will feel more comfortable with his money in the bank or Sir Bob's promises in yet another annual report that promises to enhance shareholder value.

The stock market's plunge yesterday might well encourage investors towards the relative safety of cash. The chairman may have no difficulty in putting a value of more than £5 on the company but Sears's own brokers struggled to come up with much

more than 32p a share. Without the prospect of a bid, the price might be expected to sink back closer to the lowly levels at which it was trading before Mr Green appeared on the scene. The Reid valuation relies on optimism, but shareholders have had a miserable experience.

A Major move in the right direction

Typical. It takes ages to get hold of a plumber, then once he turns up you find that he is not able to complete the job.

It would be easy to categorise Stephen Major, the plumber-cum-quantity surveyor who is leading the battle to convert Bradford & Bingley into a bank, as a man of straw. Why else would he withdraw from the fray at a crucial moment? But before Chris Rodrigues starts popping the champagne corks, he might consider whether this is a strategic withdrawal by Mr Major. Maybe the chances of B&B's members getting for conversion have been enhanced by his decision not to stand for the board.

This is not to do down Mr Major: he is probably more blame-

less than most plumbers. And we can surely discount suggestions that B&B might contemplate hiring private detectives to probe cupboards in search of skeletons. But there is no doubt that the publicity about Michael Harder's freelance butlering, and the photographs of him in a Britannia building society wearing a sauna, did not aid his fight to convert the Nationwide into a bank.

Too many voters identified the campaign with Mr Harder's eccentricities. As it was, Nationwide only remained a building society by the narrowest of margins. Mr Major's decision to withdraw allows the B&B members to concentrate on the issues, which should make this fight a better indicator of the future of building societies than the Nationwide vote.

Pint-sized problem

WOLOVERHAMPTON & Dudley Breweries is not alone in shedding the odd tear into its beer over disappointing sales. A company faced with lending on a Pac-Man defence to its bid for Marston, Thompson & Everard might have hoped for more bullish bulletts but it can blame the market. Yet W&D has indicated why Marston's owner of the treddy Pitcher & Piano chain, could not countenance the takeover. Oh, the indignity of being bought by a company that has "well-led managed concepts".

Whitbread and Nomura calm investor nerves

By DOMINIC WALSH

IVESTOR nervousness, sparked by Allied Domecq's surprise profit warning, was allayed yesterday as both Whitbread and Nomura's Unique Pub Company painted a less gloomy picture of Christmas trading.

Shares of Whitbread edged up higher to 775p as the brewing and leisure group reported that sales during December were slightly ahead of last year. However, Allied's woes continued as its shares lost a further 10p to 497p, taking the total loss over two days to 1004p – equivalent to more than £1 billion off its market value.

At a trading statement, Whitbread said that while comparable sales in food-led pubs and

restaurants had been affected by the slowdown in consumer spending, its hotel and leisure divisions were continuing to exhibit growth.

Analysts estimated that its drinks-led outlets had seen a 1 per cent decline in like-for-like sales against a market down 2 per cent. However, both its Travel Inn and Marriot hotel-chains improved while comparable profits from its David Lloyd Leisure clubs rose by about 7 per cent.

David Thomas, chief executive of Whitbread, said: "The spread of our businesses and our strong brands give us a degree of protection in difficult trading conditions." Meanwhile, Giles Thorley,

chief executive of the 2,600-strong Unique Pub Company, said there had been a "healthy pick-up in trade" in the two weeks before Christmas. He added: "Volumes in our pubs showed a couple of percentage points growth compared with last year."

Lower down the scale, Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries said that after a slow start in October and November, trade has strengthened over Christmas and the new year. Like-for-like liquor sales grew by 2.6 per cent and total retail sales were up 1.8 per cent, with its community pubs performing particularly well.

David Thompson, W&D's managing director, cautioned that the trading environment remained tough, but the company was keeping a tight rein on costs.

Analysts believe that W&D will this week increase its £262 million bid for Marston, Thompson & Everard, its Midlands rival, which last week launched a £330 million counterbid for W&D. The potential cost-savings from such a move are crucial to Mr Thompson's arguments and he is expected to revise his previous £12 million estimate upwards.

His strategy of retaining all three breweries was lent support by Scottish & Newcastle, which contracts out some of its brewing to Wolves. Tom Ward, brewing director for Scottish Courage, said W&D was achieving excellent unit costs adding: "It runs a pretty good operation."

W&D reported that pre-tax profits for the six months to November 14 were £80.9 million (£72.1 million), excluding a £12 million charge to cover the cost of integrating the retail business of Seeboard, which it acquired last year. The company is paying an interim dividend of 3.5p (2.9p) from basic earnings that fell to 11.6p a share from 12.5p.

The company said sales of personal computers, computer games and mobile phones had been strong over Christmas, but sales of domestic appliances were slow.

Richard Edwards, retail analyst at Salomon Smith Barney, said: "There is a scarce supply of Internet plays. Dixons is worth 800p

from a straight retail point of view, the problem is how do you value Freeserve?"

Wall Street has been gripped by Internet fever since a number of electronic commerce companies reported strong Christmas sales. With many of the stocks now on very high valuations, the Wall Street buying frenzy has tapered off this week, with some Internet stocks taking a tumble.

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Ice Box, page 29

Internet fever sends Dixons' shares higher

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

SHARES of Dixons shot higher yesterday as the craze for Internet-related stocks crossed the Atlantic.

The company said it had attracted 900,000 users to Freeserve, its free Internet service, launched four months ago. Hopes that it will be able to make large profits from the business through third-party agreements and advertising propelled the stock's rise to a record high of 955p, a rise of 44p.

John Clark, chief executive, said that Freeserve will break even this year. From then on, he said: "Profitability will be linked to the growth of the Internet. Internet trading is growing and Freeserve puts us in a strong position. It opens up a whole host of opportunities such as financial services, travel agencies, hotel bookings." Such services would be offered through deals with third parties, he said.

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Ice Box, page 29

FI chief sells £6m shares

By FRASER NELSON

HILARY CROPPER has cashed in on the phenomenal success of FI Group by selling £6.6 million of shares in the computer services company.

The chief executive of FI Group has joined Steve Shirley, its founder, and five other directors to sell a total £21.7 million of shares as the company returned a 75 per cent rise in interim profits.

Mrs Cropper said she has not sold for a year, and has promised not sell any more until January 2000. She said: "When you have most of your worth tied up in the place that you work, you inevitably want to take some profit. You have families, and you are working for them – not for some esoteric reason."

Shares of FI Group fell 2p to 335p yesterday as it said its order book has almost doubled to £203 million (£136 million).

The shares have risen from 481p in 1996, peaking at 329p earlier this week.

A stream of new long-term contracts from London Electricity, Halifax and Marks & Spencer helped pre-tax profits to £7.54 million (£4.31 million) for six months to October 31.

Mrs Cropper has reduced her stake from 8.8 per cent to 6.5 per cent. FI's 7,000 employees own 40 per cent of shares.

Headline earnings were 2.62p (1.66p) per share, and the interim dividend is 0.63p (0.43p).

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Pearson wants to be a millionaire

By RAYMOND SNODDY, MEDIA EDITOR

PEARSON TELEVISION, the world's largest producer of television game shows, is negotiating to buy the overseas rights to the latest ITV hit show, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*

The production, produced by Celador Productions, an independent company and presented by Chris Tarrant, has been attracting audiences as high as 17 million.

Pearson Television, part of the Pearson media and information group, is in negotiations to buy the format rights so it can try to replicate the show's success around the world.

Pearson claims to make about 90 per cent of the leading game shows in world television markets through the acquisition of companies such as Grundy and All American.

Yesterday, Pearson announced the purchase of a 10.9 per cent stake in E-Pub Holdings, a leading US online entertainment company.

Under the deal, the two companies will develop online versions of several of Pearson's game shows, including *Family Feud*, *Match Game* and *>Password*, on Upright, E-Pub's game show website.

The stake in E-Pub Holdings would normally be worth £13 million but Pearson is paying only £800,000 because of the intellectual property the British company is bringing to the venture. If the first games are a success, Pearson will be able to increase its stake in E-Pub.

Greg Dyke, chairman and chief executive of Pearson Television, said: "E-Pub has the online game show expertise to bring our television properties to the growing Internet audience."

The initial deal between Pearson and E-Pub will run for two years.

Chemicals firms face slowdown

EUROPE'S £264 billion chemical industry is set for a slowdown in 1999 under pressure from rising imports and threatened by macroeconomic factors, the Chemical Industries Association (CIA) forecast yesterday.

BA's existing frequent-flier link with rival Japanese airline ANA will cease on September 30, ANA, which has extensive domestic routes in Japan, has said it intends to join the rival Star Alliance, which includes Cathay Pacific and Qantas.

BA said that the two airlines had agreed to link their frequent-flier programmes and schemes and do code-sharing on their routes. BA cut back its exposure to the Japanese market last year, ending flights to Osaka. The airline said yesterday

that the link-up with JAL would increase access to the Japanese market without the need to invest in new routes. BA's existing frequent-flier link with rival Japanese airline ANA will cease on September 30, ANA, which has extensive domestic routes in Japan, has said it intends to join the rival Star Alliance, which includes Cathay Pacific and Qantas.

BA shares rose 5p to 401p yesterday, against the sharp stock market fall. However, they remain at a big discount to last year's high of 703p, struck before the beginning of Asia's financial crisis.

The CIA, which represents about 200 British chemical producers, said its members were threatened by the strong pound and economic malaise that is deeply divided over global warming. The Kyoto Protocol, which sets out targets for the reduction in carbon emissions, has aroused fierce opposition from US oil majors, led by Exxon, who reject the need to curb fuel consumption and pour scorn on suggestions that fossil fuel burning is a cause of climate change. Until recently, Amoco was an opponent of Kyoto but BP has spoken out in favour of measures to reduce carbon emissions, closely followed by Shell. Energy taxes would be likely to hurt the oil majors with large capital intensive and fuel-consuming plants.

BP backs tax to cut carbon emissions

By CARL MORTISHED

BP Amoco, Britain's largest oil company, said yesterday that energy taxes should play a role in providing incentives to reduce carbon emissions.

The CIA said European production is expected to match a 1998 forecasted rise of 2 per cent, which was revised down from last year's 1998 prediction of 3.5 per cent.

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With effect from 7th January 1999, interest rates payable on the underlined accounts have changed.

Britannic Group Services

BRITANNIC GROUP SERVICES LIMITED IN ASSOCIATION WITH BANK OF SCOTLAND

BRITANNIC SOVEREIGN ACCOUNT	AER%	Gross%	Net%
Balances up to £1,999	5.81%	3.75%	

STOCKMARKET

MARKET REPORT

Investors count cost as Brazil crisis hits FTSE

INVESTORS in the City were last night counting the cost of the worsening economic crisis in Brazil.

Share prices in New York, London and other European financial markets fell sharply in response to news of Brazil's currency devaluation.

At one stage, the FTSE 100 index tumbled almost 300 points, reflecting a loss of 260 points in the Dow Jones industrial average in early trading on Wall Street.

In the event, the FTSE managed to reduce the loss to 183.5 at 5,850.1 by the close, while the FTSE 250 index shed 102.7 at 4,874.

Brokers said there was evidence of concerted selling as a total of 1.12 billion shares changed hands. The London market appeared braced for further falls.

In the futures pit, the March series closed just five points above the cash market, indicating a discount to true value.

Blue chips suffered the heaviest falls with the banks, pharmaceuticals and engineering companies particularly hard hit.

Among the casualties Glaxo Wellcome fell 59p to £21.33, Grana Group 45p to £11.00c, Orange 60p to 873p, Smith Industries 61p to 803p, Royal & Sun Alliance 71p to 483p, and Zeteca 71p to £26.73.

Yesterday's profits warning from Allied Domex, 19p lower at 497p, had a knock-on effect in Bass, down 18p to 786p, Lehman Brothers, the US securities house, has taken the opportunity to reiterate its bearish stance on the shares.

It says the big four, Allied, Bass, Whitbread, 8p dearer at 775p, and Scottish & Newcastle, 28p off at 684p, face the prospect of negative investment returns from the heavy spending programmes in their respective pub chains.

Boots was a nervous market, retreating 11p to 998p in heavy trading that saw more than two million shares change hands ahead of today's trading statement. Brokers are worried that the chemist had not enjoyed the spending spree at Christmas that had been hoped for.

Brokers remain clearly impressed with the growth of Dixons' free internet service Freeserve with the price adding 44p to 958p. Like-for-like sales of the consumer electronics retailer, which is chaired by Sir Stanley Kalms, rose 3 per cent over the



Sir Stanley Kalms, right, and John Clare, the chief executive of Dixons, saw a 44p rise on the back of Freeserve's success

Christmas period. WH Smith also has its own book site on the Web which was behind its rise of 20p to 537p.

Meanwhile, City investors continued to clamour for internet stocks which have not enjoyed the success in the UK commanded by their US counterparts. Even so, many traders take the view that they remain high-risk ventures. On-Line,

where the directors were forced to unload 150,000 shares on Tuesday to improve liquidity, surged another 12p to 574p. They started the week at 17p. Dan Wagner's Dialog Corporation was 1p firmer at 744p.

Bid talk helped Guardian Royal Exchange to maintain its composure in a falling market with the price closing 14p dearer at 337p. It follows a re-

port in *The Times* indicating that the group is close to agreeing the terms of a bid from the French insurer Axa.

Allied Zurich came off 27p at 925p as BT Alex Brown, the broker, urged clients to switch into rival CGU, 33p off 890p.

Moving against the trend Blaagden Industries firmed 16p to 132p. Dealers say a bid could be on the way, having seen the shares plunge from a peak of 183p since November.

What is going on at Fiktronic, down 29p at 612p? Professor John Rhodes, chairman, travelled down from Yorkshire to the Square Mile yesterday, where he was seen with one of his corporate advisers.

The cellular and cable communications specialist has been linked with Airtel, all-square at 358p, which earlier this week announced it had received a bid approach.

Luminar receded 10p to 665p after Mercury Asset Management reduced its holding in the night club operator from 48 per cent to 42.5 per cent.

There were some interesting trades going through on the ticker in Aegis Group, 18p firmer at 101p. This included several lines of 750,000 shares. John Amerman, a non-executive director, has bought 10,429 shares at 914p, taking his total holding to 21,358.

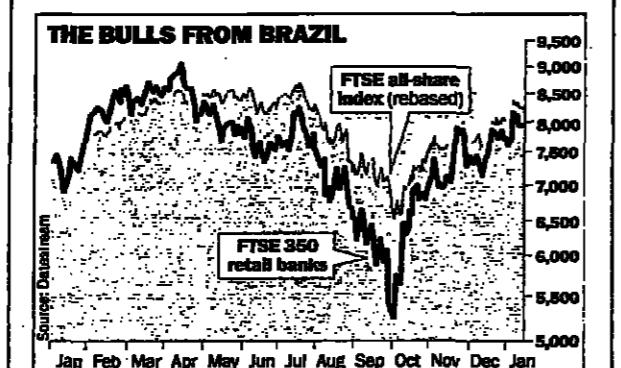
Talk of a bid fuelled a rise of 14p to 124p in T Clarke. The construction group trades in an illiquid market where dealers are normally only prepared to make a price in 1,000 shares at a time.

□ **GILT-EDGEDED:** The growing Brazilian debt crisis may have undermined equities, but provided a further welcome fillip to the bond market.

Prices among longer-dated issues stretched to more than £2, at one stage, with the best gains seen in the eight to ten-year range. But the best levels were not always held.

In the future pit, the March series of the long gilt rose 75p to £19.51 as the total number of contracts completed reached 49,000. In longs, Treasury 8 per cent 2021 touched £15.70, while in shorts Treasury 7 per cent 2002 put up 16p at £10.79.

□ **NEW YORK:** Shares were sharply down in late morning trade but were off their lows by midday. The Dow Jones industrial average was down 176.87 at 9,297.81.



BANKS bore the brunt of yesterday's sell-off as the Brazilian debt crisis continued to bubble away.

The worst losses were seen in Standard Chartered, down 84p, or 10 per cent, at 742p, NatWest 105p to 101.66, HSBC 125p to 116.7p, Barclays 77p to 112.22, Lloyds TSB 43p to 82.1p, and Royal Bank of Scotland 46p to 102.91p.

Investors are worried about the exposure of British banks to Brazil. They do not want a repeat of the bad debt crisis that sparked the 'toxic waste' scare.

They say this was just the catalyst that sparked the sell-off, but warn the banks will not be immune to bad debts and increased competition at home.

Financial troubles in the late 1980s. But the banks have learnt their lesson and have only minimal exposure to the world's eighth largest economy.

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Western financial markets declared it was business as usual in October. Half the world might be diving into uncontrolled recession, but the hedge funds had been saved. The dual motors of the Nato countries and euroland, which together account for well over half measured world output, were still growing at a respectable pace. Together, they could keep the world economy on the road.

West of the Vistula and North of the tropics, asset prices have been booming. Even in Britain, there are still plenty of jobs of a sort.

In East Asia, epicentre of gloom, avuncular emissaries from the IMF, the World Bank *et al* have offered positive thinking. A meeting of central bank governors in Hong Kong this week brought reassurance that the worst is past and things are getting better.

No matter, perhaps, that most citizens in stricken parts would give the standard pantomime reply: "Oh no they're not". The fall in Malaysian industrial output appears to be accelerating but at least

Trade is weak link in global stability

the Indonesian rupiah has recovered to 30 per cent of its 1997 value, up from 14 per cent last summer. More of a dead cat bounce than the West's bungee boom.

On Tuesday, the US Treasury Secretary used a visit from the President of Argentina to offer the "total support of the global community" for policy in Brazil, the teetering domino that was propped up at the end of the last wave of financial panic. This time, it was too late. So we are back to damage limitation, entreating China not to help its economy by devaluing too.

However, confidence-sapping, Brazil's devaluation was predicted and widely recommended. It underlines how fragile the world economy still is. If Asia, Eastern Europe and South America are to keep their economic heads above water, they must rely on American consumers continuing to spend

not just all their income but a good slice of their capital gains as well. So Tuesday's threats of US trade sanctions were more ominous than the rumblings in Rio.

In Tokyo, Charlene Barshefsky, US Trade Representative, threatened Japan with "punitive sanctions" unless it quickly reversed a rise in steel exports to the US. Steel was just one facet of rapidly worsening trade relations.

In Geneva, US trade ambassador Rita Hayes pressed ahead with threats to levy punitive 100 per cent tariffs on about \$500 million worth of EU exports to America over the tangled banana dispute. America backs the heirs of the United Fruit, inventor of the banana republic. The bizarre list of imports targeted, from cashmere sweaters to gilt chandeliers, no doubt answered lobby pleas. Such disputes will multiply.

America is heading towards a \$300 billion trade deficit this year. Euroland and Japan should run up a combined \$200 billion surplus. Many US businesses will be hit by imports in the run-up to the 2000 presidential election campaign, ensuring that protection, or "fair trade" is high on the agenda. Both the US and the EU have lec-

tured Asia, including Japan, to rely on internal demand rather than export-led recovery. If anyone took the advice seriously, they would be condemning the region to a decade of depression.

America can still claim to be the champion of free trade, even if vulnerable sectors are rigidly protected. A key task of US Trade Representatives is therefore to shout implications against US trade partners through a media megaphone to calm populist calls to save American jobs from the foreigner.

In continental Europe, protectionism is more intellectually respectable. Adherence to free trade is often only pragmatic. As soon as the stricken countries exploit recovery in the eurozone economy to boost their exports, they can expect even more hysterical cries of foul.

As British Steel knows too well, trade in steel is more vulnera-

ly see the open trading system come under greater strain than at any time since the protectionism that did so much harm in the 1930s was banished 50 years ago.

A trade war is most likely to happen by accident. US megaphone trade diplomacy is routine, aimed randomly at South Korea, Russia, India, Pakistan, Japan or Britain, which has been singled out for exemplary punishment in that other Gulf conflict over bananas. Smaller partners will no doubt surrender to the superpower's trade gunboat. But belligerent threats do tend to spark real war, especially if the threat has to be backed up with action, as in 1914.

How easy it would then be, for instance, for the EU to raise the stakes in retaliation; how emotionally difficult not to. We should try to resist temptation. A trade war would finally plunge the global economy into depression, even if some would prosper for a while.

America should be reminded, yet again, that what is said for consumption at home can have disastrous consequences abroad.

BTR investors aim to engineer a better deal from the chaos

Paul Durman
reports from
the disarray of
an extraordinary
shareholder
meeting

It is just as well that BTR did not choose to hold its extraordinary general meeting in the Brewery, a popular venue in the City. That might have provoked an all-too-obvious jibe about its organisational skills.

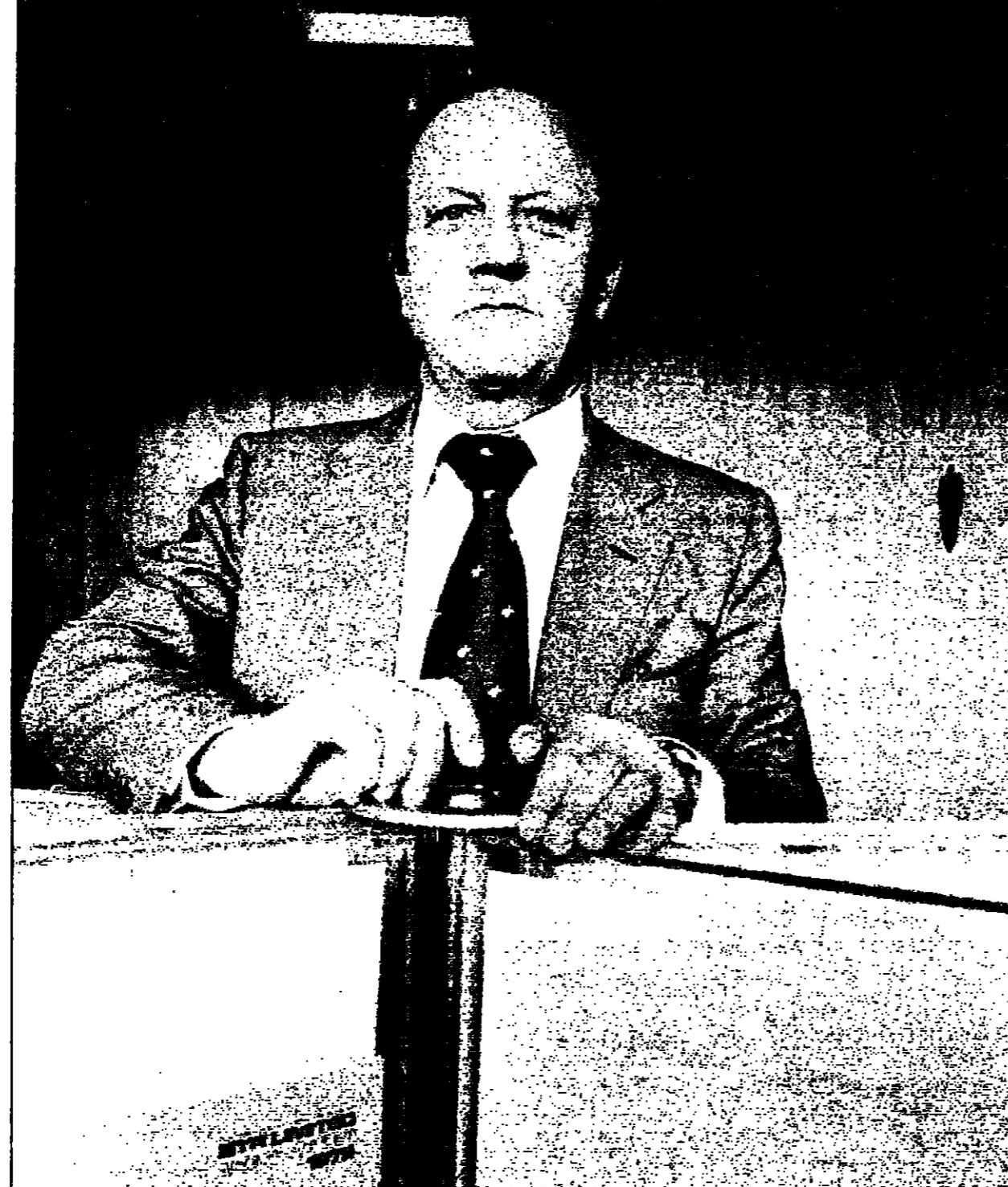
Yesterday's gathering of BTR shareholders, which essentially marked the death knell for what was once Britain's seventh-largest company, descended into procedural chaos as private investors attempted to block the "disgraceful" merger with Siebe that they have been offered.

Bob Bauman, the engineering group's American chairman, was forced to reverse his initial ruling that an attempt to adjourn the meeting was out of order. This followed a hurried consultation, lasting several minutes, between David Stevens, BTR's general counsel and secretary, and lawyers from Slaughter & May. Mr Stevens had earlier been unable to provide his chairman with a breakdown of the proxy votes he was holding. He must have had an interesting conversation with Mr Bauman yesterday afternoon.

There then followed another delay while the company tried to find poll cards for the adjournment debate. Shareholders milled around, offering encouragement to Eddie Northcote, the retired management accountant who proposed the adjournment, and muttering about the ensuing shambles.

Like the vote on the £8.5 billion merger with Siebe, the poll on the adjournment was a foregone conclusion because Mr Bauman was holding proxies equivalent to 98.9 per cent of the 58 per cent of shares voted. This, too, was a bone of contention — how could he use votes cast in support of the merger to back another, entirely different proposal? The meeting did not stagger to a close until almost four and a half hours after it began.

This final chapter was somehow in keeping with BTR's decline since the retirement in 1993 of Sir Owen Green, its driving force through three decades. The sprawling conglomerate with an obsession about improving profit mar-



Sir Owen Green was the driving force behind BTR for three decades and his departure marked the start of a decline

gins has found it difficult to learn new tricks in an era of low inflation.

Ian Strachan arrived as chief executive in April 1995 and tried to create a culture based on sales growth. He made billions of pounds of disposals to turn BTR into an allegedly focused engineering group. But neither this, nor the arrival of the well-regarded Mr Bauman, could bring an end to a succession of profit warnings and disappointing trading statements.

Long-term shareholders in

BTR — and many attended yesterday's meeting — had seen its share price slide from 400p to 95p in less than five years. They traded above 220p as recently as last May.

Yet Mr Bauman and his board struck their escape deal with Siebe on terms that value BTR's shares at a 14-year low. From Phillips & Drew downwards, few shareholders have much enthusiasm for the proposals to create a control systems colossus with Siebe — not least because Siebe has its own problems, losing the premium

rating that it enjoyed until last May. In the circumstances, BTR's board must have expected a rough ride. Mr Northcote had already, on Monday, unsuccessfully asked the High Court to force the adjournment of the meeting. The BTR shareholders who turned up were uniformly hostile to a deal that gives them only 45 per cent of the enlarged BTR Siebe, despite contributing about two thirds of the assets.

One small investor was greeted with applause when he said: "A board who recom-

mended this deal should be sacked — and especially the non-executive directors whose job it is to see that shareholder value is maintained."

A Mr Bowler queried whether BTR could accept a valuation based on a share price trading at a ten-year low. Surely some bidder could have been found that would offer 140p, perhaps 160p, a share. "We've been skinned," he said.

Kenneth Riley, another small investor, was allowed time to expound a long analysis of the relative values of

BT and Siebe based on sales, assets, gearing and other criteria. His conclusion was that BTR should be worth 2.3 times Siebe. "This is the directors acting against the interests of the shareholders," said Mr Riley.

Mr Bauman insisted that the board did consider other options to revive BTR. He said:

"We have examined all the alternatives. We determined that a merger was the best course for the company.

"If anybody left that they wanted to buy the company then it certainly has been possible for somebody to come through and do it. We think this is the best offer — and it's the only offer on the table." This, of course, has been the reluctant conclusion of the company's institutional shareholders.

Shareholders were also upset that they will miss out on a further £500 million that BTR was planning to hand back to them. And they complained about the £18 million of fees being paid to Goldman Sachs and Schroders, BTR's investment banking advisers.

Much of the venom was directed against the hapless Mr Strachan — though hapless is perhaps not the right word to describe a man who stands to collect more than £1.5 million in compensation if, as expected, he leaves BTR Siebe after overseeing the start of the integration.

One shareholder said the proposed level of compensation was "a ridiculous amount of money", adding: "The only reason for this merger is to remove him from his high office." Mr Strachan was told that "in all honour" he should cut down the amount of money he takes when he leaves. Mr Bauman defended Mr Strachan's deal-making but pointedly added that as deputy chairman of BTR Siebe "he's not in line command of operations."

Mr Northcote and other diehards have not yet given up hope. He said that he and "dozens" of other investors intend to petition the High Court on February 1 to persuade a judge to block the Siebe deal at the final hurdle.

Mr Northcote insists that the merger documents are misleading because Siebe's figures include £300 million of intangible assets — a value that would not be recognised under BTR's accounting conventions. He said this makes the merger an even worse deal for BTR's shareholders.

It looks a futile effort, but Mr Northcote has some "previous" in this area. In 1992 he successfully prevented Alan Sugar from taking Amstrad private at a knockdown price.

Long-term shareholders in

Junk e-mail

THERE is an e-mail doing the rounds of the City concerning the Walt Disney Company and a new product called Beta E-mail Tracking developed by Disney and Microsoft. The message explains

that as part of the tests for the system, 13,000 people must receive it, so pass it on to 15 other people.

There is a prize, cash and/or trips to Disneyland, offered at the end of the process. The e-mail has, in just a couple of days, made the rounds of Barclays Capital, Cazenove and any number of other firms. You will be seeing it soon.

Amazing how credulous people can be. It is a complete fake, of course. "I've been asked to tell anyone who phones about it that it's not from us," says a lady in corporate affairs.

Who would think up such a pointless spoof? "It's designed to clog up the e-mail system," says someone who knows about these things.

Heart-warming, but not, alas, true. Wicks had to stand down because a) the Monetary Committee has ceased to exist and b) he is due to retire in 18 months, and the term is for two years. Still, it gave the French the chance to be nice about us for a change.

I HEAR the normally hardheaded computer firm EDS is considering giving a large sum to charity in Kingston upon Thames to compensate those who received housing benefit late after EDS took over some services for the local council. In fact, says the excellent industry paper, Computer Weekly, a five-figure sum has been agreed. EDS admits to problems with the revo-

lance tax and how to avoid this after your death. The seminar, appropriately if coincidentally, is at the Royal College of Pathologists.

French leave

AS I predicted last week, Jean Lemierre, a French Treasury civil servant, has been enthroned as chairman of the powerful Economic and Finance Committee, successor to the Monetary Committee, which was chaired by our own Treasury man, Sir Nigel Wicks.

His departure has led to an unusual and fulsome tribute in the French press. La Tribune told its readers that he had gone because of Britain's non-involvement in the euro. So the Englishman had done the decent thing, much about the British sense of fair play, etc, etc, and stood aside.

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THE TIMES
CITY DIARY

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lance and benefits services last year and is indeed considering such a "gesture", says a spokesman. He seems thoroughly annoyed that the news has come out.

I get the impression his petulance might be because the company would like to have announced the kind "donation" itself. With the proper spin, of course.

Net growth

STANDING room only at the Dixons analysis meeting yesterday, with more than a hundred on hand. A number of the analysts were strangely unfamiliar to the company.

The reason became obvious when the questions started. They were part of the strange tribe who cover only Internet stocks, because Dixons, as you will read elsewhere, is Britain's premier Internet stock.

Retail-watchers wanting to know about gross margins were swamped by techies asking about "third generation appliances". Everyone eventually decided that Dixons was a raging buy, though they were a bit hazy on precisely why.

Milken names

THE Milken Institute, chairman Michael Milken of junk bonds fame, is inviting registrations for a March conference on the global economy. The cast list includes five economics Nobel Prize winners.

It does not include Albert Gore, US Vice-President, Helmut Kohl, Robert Rubin, the Treasury Secretary, and two other senior US politicians. Nor even the ever-popular

Mikhail Gorbachev. They are "invited but not confirmed".

I cannot speak for their availability, though I wonder about Gorbachev, who doesn't get out much. But I notice there was no invite for Clinton. Perhaps they don't think he'll be around by then.

MARTIN WALLER
martin.waller@the-times.co.uk

Milken: host of illustrious names not yet signed up for conference



"This country should have a recession more often"

Equities tumble as gilts advance

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

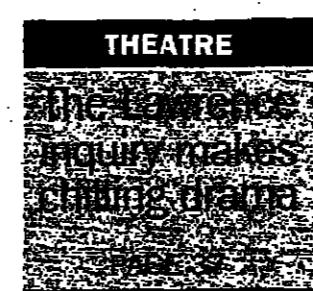
1998	High	Low	Company	Price	Yield	PE
100	100	99	ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES	60	1%	120
101	101	100	100	250	1%	120
102	102	101	101	144	1%	120
103	103	102	102	144	1%	120
104	104	103	103	144	1%	120
105	105	104	104	144	1%	120
106	106	105	105	144	1%	120
107	107	106	106	144	1%	120
108	108	107	107	144	1%	120
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223	223	222	222	144	1%	120
224	224	223	223	144	1%	120
225</td						



NEW ON VIDEO

Gary Oldman finds himself Lost in Space
PAGE 36

THE TIMES ARTS



REAL ART: Amateurish? Stuffy? The old insults no longer apply to the thoroughly modernised Royal Academy, says Richard Cork

A breath of fresh air in Piccadilly

Three years ago the Royal Academy was racked by a well-publicised financial scandal. The much-liked bursar, Clark, was found of embezzling nearly £100,000. Worse still, the incoming secretary, David Gordon, was horrified to discover no audited account had been since 1993.

eventually found out the Academy had been operating at an annual deficit of £100,000 in 1994 and 1995, as well as on the way to another. "All our reserves have been swallowed," Gordon says, "and everyone was in a state of anxiety." The RA's tent, Sir Philip Dowson, led the bursar's fraud as a rib blow and very disturbing. If you'd asked me previously who I could trust in the army, I'd have said him." such a venerable institution which prided itself on its independence from state, the crisis was especially trying. But now, as the preparations to open its much-anticipated exhibition *Monet in the 19th Century* on January 10th, a different mood prevails at Burlington House. In the financial year it made a £100,000 operating surplus. Summer the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded the Academy £1.4 million to finish the restoration of its main galleries, accumulated deficit has reduced to £500,000.

for the imminent *Monet* hopes are high that it will attract more than 600,000 visitors. Advance ticket sales reached 100,000 already, a booking record for any art exhibition, even though the entry charge is set at an unprecedentedly high £15. In anticipation of the show, a large T-shaped marquee has been erected in the courtyard to house a ticket office, cafe and other facilities, despite bitter comments about the expected from other organisations premises in the Burlington House quadrangle.

Now the Academy manager, David Gordon, has to restore pummelled morale and engineer such a turnaround in its fortunes? One important reform centred on establishing two new committees to strengthen the previous lack of grasp of finances. The management committee now enjoys monetary discipline. The management committee now enjoys monetary discipline. The management committee now enjoys monetary discipline.



Preparing for next week's *Monet* blockbuster show, Royal Academy Secretary David Gordon recalls joining a debt-ridden organisation that had not done its accounts for two years

ciations, trustees and staff to coordinate the RA's increasingly convoluted activities.

According to Dowson, it has proved "enormously helpful" to the Council, the Academy's governing body. But he admits that the management committee's advent provoked "two stiff debates among Academicians who feared that their power would be eroded". Dowson, who confesses he had no idea when elected about how much of his life the presidency would consume, thinks that "the Academy, like many historical institutions, outgrew itself. We now have a turnover of £15 million, and recent experience has made us stronger."

That is why the RA is transforming itself into a formidable fundraiser. The Exhibitions Patrons Group, set up only in 1997, has already added over £1 million to the Academy's coffers from donors, foundations and trusts. A new café is now open in the well of the Sackler Wing, and the shows held in the last 18 months have made a huge contribution to the RA's economic wellbeing.

Sensation alone attracted almost 300,000 visitors, making it the most highly attended contemporary art exhibition in Britain for half a century. The benefits of such an arrangement remain vast; and David Gordon is the first to insist that the RA, in its determination to become a more professional outfit, must at the same time "keep the flame alight". In other words its fundamental aim must always be to foster appreciation of the visual arts in Britain, just as its first President, Sir Joshua Reynolds, hoped when the institution was founded in 1768.

When the Academy moved to Burlington House from Trafalgar Square in 1868, it was expected to dedicate itself to educational pursuits. Hence the British Government's willingness to lease a prime Piccadilly location to the Academy for 999 years at a peppercorn rent. The benefits of such an arrangement remain vast; and David Gordon is the first to insist that the RA, in its determination to become a more professional outfit, must at the same time "keep the flame alight". In other words its fundamental aim must always be to foster appreciation of the visual arts in Britain, just as its first President, Sir Joshua Reynolds, hoped when the institution was founded in 1768.

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But how? Many visitors might have imagined that Academicians wholeheartedly backed the provocative new directions explored by artists in the show. The truth is far more complex. Rosenthal was definitely in favour of the exhibition. But some Academicians were aghast at the work it contained, in particular Marcus Harvey's notorious *Myra Hindley* portrait.

Several of the institution's most notable artist-members, including Gillian Ayres and Michael Sandle, resigned in protest. And Dowson says that the internal arguments about *Sensation* were bitter. "There were many things I didn't like in the show," he admits, "but that's not the point. It was a very important exhibition. In a MORI survey gauging the public reaction to *Sensation*, 91 per cent of visitors said that the Academy has a responsibility to show art even if it shocks or causes offence. Like it or loathe it, the work was serious and deserved to be looked at in a Central London gallery."

Drawn exclusively from the collection built up by Charles Saatchi, *Sensation* attracted a new young audience to Burlington House. But if they returned to sample last year's Summer Show, they may well have felt puzzled and disappointed. Apart from Gary Hume, who displayed a large and arresting new painting, none of the artists in *Sensation* was included. A seismic

fault still separates the stalwarts who exhibit in the Summer Show from the young generation who have made new British art of the 1990s internationally acclaimed.

Compared with the intolerable stolidness of the Academy 50 years ago, when the apoplectic President Sir Alfred Munnings railed against Picasso and modernity in general, Dowson is an exemplary liberal. "Over the past ten years the Summer Show has changed extraordinarily," he claims. "It is far less academic than before." But the exhibition still fails to represent many of the most outstanding British artists, from Sir Anthony Caro and Lucian Freud to Damien Hirst and Rachel Whiteread.

So does the RA have any plans, in its future exhibition programme, to expand its involvement with the young? "I would love to say that we will be doing *Sensation* after Sen-

sation," says Rosenthal. "Of course one would like to keep the new audience, and there is a big hunger for contemporary art. Maybe the summer exhibition should change after 2000: people still think the Academy is stuffy, with old Norman as an irritant."

But exhibitions must be planned three years in advance, and such a schedule militates against organising a topical exhibition at precisely the right moment. Perhaps that is why the RA's main shows over the coming year concentrate on the past, culminating in September with a grand retrospective of paintings by Anthony Van Dyck.

Even so, Rosenthal is excited about staging three large installations of contemporary sculpture each year in the RA courtyard. The scheme commenced last year with 60 cast-iron figures by Antony Gormley called *Critical Mass*, standing, crouching, dangling and even climbing up the walls.

Tony Cragg will follow this summer, and Rosenthal says "it would be great to have artists from abroad like Jeff Koons and his giant puppy made of flowers". Planning permission has been obtained to modify the courtyard, and even move the hallowed bronze statue of Reynolds nearer the archway to make room for spectacular showpieces.

A nother source of excitement is located just behind Burlington House, where the Victorian premises at 6 Burlington Gardens will be vacated by the Museum of Mankind in 2000. The RA, lacking a lecture theatre and desperate for space to accommodate its ever-expanding educational activities, wants to take over Sir James Pennethorne's splendid edifice.

Michael Hopkins has been chosen to prepare a feasibility study, and Gordon feels that "the Government, in its quest for better education, should let us take this building on". Dowson, a distinguished architect himself, would also like it to become a showcase for modern architecture. "Nothing is more important than the built environment," he declares, "and artists don't realise what architects are up to. We live in a mad world with planning. We urgently need a place where chairmen of housing committees can go and see the finest work by contemporary architects."

Above all, though, Dowson nurtures a vision for the RA as a whole. "In my dream," he says, "I'd like to see the Academy more accessible to the public. Providing enjoyment is vital, of course, but I particularly want us to be more open. I suspect the RA can seem a bit historical, but it's not — it's breaking ground, and ought to share that excitement as an institution for everyone. Reynolds started it as a gift to the nation, and the public should feel it belongs to them."

LEADER OFFER THE TIMES

metro



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CHANGING TIMES

Hanging out with a legacy

With a new album *Back On Top* ready for release in March, and a new nine-piece band to be broken in prior to a string of dates in America, Van Morrison elected to play his first show of the year on Tuesday night in the enchanting if somewhat sedate environs of Barnstaple on the North Devon coast. It nearly didn't happen. Thanks to a bout of flu, there was some doubt as to whether Morrison would take the stage of the 500-seat Queen's Theatre at all and, once he had done so, uncertainty as to how long he would stay.

An undemonstrative performer at the best of times, Morrison looked almost comically disconcerted to begin with as he stood to attention in his peaked cap and shades and the band struck up *Jackie Wilson Said*. "Let it all hang out," he barked, his tone and posture suggesting the exact opposite, while the musicians opted around the arrangement as if there was a baby asleep in the next room.

Strapping on a Les Paul guitar, Morrison picked out a few chords with a distracted air as he wandered through a selection of less exposed items from his vast back catalogue, including a funky *Dweller on the Threshold* and a politely swinging *These Dreams of You*.

After remonstrating with various members of the band during a faltering version of *If You Love Me*, Morrison abruptly exited the stage, leaving

POP
Van Morrison
Queen's, Barnstaple



Exit stage left: Van Morrison
Keyboard player John Savannah is singing *Warm Love* with the back of his head towards the audience. Despite the mood of crisis in the air, this was what the band (with whom Morrison never rehearses) had been doing all week, and their playing became no

tearably more relaxed in his unexpected absence. Morrison too seemed to benefit from the respite, and when he returned to take command of *You Make Me Feel So Free*, his performance shifted up a gear.

Many of the songs had never been performed in concert before, and the set continued to alternate intriguingly between out-of-the-way oldies such as *Two Tower* and slightly rejigged numbers from last year's album. *The Healing Game*, including *Rough God Goes Riding* and *Sometimes We Cry*, not so much a greatest hits show as a re-examination of his legacy.

Despite some ragged endings, signalled in a highly visible pub rock style, there were superlative individual performances, particularly by guitarist Johnny Scott and Morrison's long-serving saxophonist, Pee Wee Ellis.

Things finally began to gel on a gorgeous version of *Georgia on My Mind*, a song ideally suited to Morrison's gruff staccato delivery, and the one moment of the night when he seemed to find the energy to dig into the emotion of the lyric. After that, it was solos all round during *Symphony Sid*, but Morrison's presence was diminishing fast. He managed a soulful *Have I Told You Lately* and a perfunctory *Moondance* then took his leave, still a work in progress after all these years.

DAVID SINCLAIR

Old-time organ grinder

He has outlasted most of the teen idols that he backed at the dawn of rock'n'roll. Long after the last Robbie Williams poster has been consigned to the dustbin, George Fame will still be out there.

Fame was never the most conventional pop star, and this celebration of his 40 years in showbusiness also ran along its own lines. Anyone who came expecting to hear red-hot, flamingo Club-style R&B would probably have gone away somewhat puzzled.

Yeh Yeh flashed by at the very beginning, as if he was glad to get it out of the way, a strangely lugubrious Toots Thielemans ballad closed the first half, and the homely tones of Hoagy Carmichael's *Rockin' Chair* rang out at the encore.

Thinking of Fame and you instantly see images of him sweating over the console of a battered Hammond organ. But he has always had a habit

of switching hats. This evening was, metaphorically speaking, an occasion for his snappiest jazz fedora, pulled low over his brow as he crooned in front of the BBC Big Band.

And shouted too. He is not the gentlest of vocalists; even so, an overbearing brass section kept shouldering him aside. Fans of Stan Kenton would have approved, but for the rest of us this was a simple case of too much big band, not enough singer.

Some overfussy arrangements proved a hindrance too, especially in conjunction with his sometimes mannered, horn-like vocals. It all worked best when Fame and his conductor Steve Gray stuck to relatively simple, riff-based arrangements redolent of the basic swing machine or the Ray Charles band. Cuco O'Farrell's setting of the old hit *Bonnie and Clyde* supplied plenty of recoil.

The moments when the orchestra dissolved into a smaller unit were always telling, as in the opening of *When My Dreamboat Comes Home*, played in tribute to one of Fame's vocal mentors, Mose Allison. Gray's *City Life* strutted along in cool urban style and cheekily inserted subliminal quotes from *Little Rascals* and other Monk tunes.

Chef Baker received a namecheck on *But Not For Me*, which featured one of Fame's trademark vocalise solos. Ingenious, yes, but the rare occasions when he slid across the stage to the trusty organ were even better.

CLIVE DAVIS



Richard Cork
illy

THE TIMES THURSDAY JANUARY 14 1999

ARTS 35

Look, Death, get a life

NEW MOVIES: James Christopher sees Brad Pitt make the Grim Reaper sexy (if you're a teenage girl) in *Meet Joe Black*

There is a puzzle in *Meet Joe Black* that troubles Anthony Hopkins' media tycoon for three swollen hours of expensive, glossy melodrama. About to drop dead of a heart attack, Hopkins' billionaire Bill Parrish is granted a supernatural reprieve if he will instruct Death, also known as Joe Black, on the joys of life. Death, in short, wants a vacation. "Why 'me'? Why now?" asks Parrish, reasonably spooked when he discovers that Death has borrowed the body of Brad Pitt. "Call it boredom," says Black, metaphorically shrugging his shoulders and inspecting his fingernails.

One sympathises with the grim one. After an infinity spent hobbling around in a shabby cloak, clutching a scythe and being reviled for his indiscriminate slaughter of humanity, Death wants to find out what this fuss called being alive is all about. He might be naive but he has an impeccable taste in bodies. Forget the flabby Hell's Angel with Grateful Dead tattoo, let's have that golden-haired lawyer conveniently flattened like a rag doll in a car accident. It's a shocking scene that injects a dose of black humour into the otherwise life-affirming piece of whimsy that director Martin Brest makes from the original 1934 film, *Death Takes a Holiday*.

Fun for Black is hell for Parrish. Sworn to keep Black's true identity a secret to avoid being whisked away like Faust, Parrish has to dream up excuses as to why this impeccably polite social incompetent who guzzles biscuits and peanut butter is following him around like a poodle.

The subsequent joy of Brest's film is seeing the omnipotent Joe Black flapping around like a fish out of water and discovering the confusion of falling in love with Parrish's scrumptious daughter, Susan (Claire Forlani). Typically, it's Forlani's sexy medic, a far prettier version of the young Barbra Streisand, who does all the running — a marathon rather than a sprint. Death, it transpires, is a shy, fumbling virgin who doesn't know how his lips, let alone his fles, work. But what a battle of the close-ups! She all dewy eyes and confused, animated eyebrows; he glazed as a corpse. 'Necrophilia' has never looked more one-sided.

Nor, unfortunately, has a film. The double-act between Hopkins and Pitt is decidedly lopsided: While Pitt is perfectly in tune with his comic creation, Hopkins' megalomaniac baron lends the film a gravitas it simply does not deserve. He is brilliant delivering crisp lines with that world-weary, melancholy charm. And he is lavishly indulged. You can almost feel the cameras bowing and scraping as Parrish rumbles into fabulously appointed rooms to make heartfelt speeches to his daughters over dinner, or to fight the takeover bid that threatens to pull his empire apart.

But you could scampers ships in the pauses between him and Black. They are not only entities from two different dimensions, but two com-

Meet Joe Black
Empire, 12, 181 mins.
Brad Pitt, aka Death,
discovers sex on holiday

The Opposite of Sex
Warner Village West End,
18, 100 mins.
Caustic satire concerning
political correctness

Buttonmen
ICA, 102 mins.
Kinky Czech comedy that
squeezes humour from the
upholstery

Doberman
Metro 18, 103 mins.
Nihilistic splatter-movie for
the unconstructed

Sour Grapes
Virgin Tropicadero, 15, 92 mins.
Frothy sitcom dressed up
as a movie

pletely different films. Brest spends far too long trying to give both characters unwarranted credibility, when the film's soul already belongs to Pitt's Black. He is, after all, the most unlikely, nay unbelievable, Death one can hope to meet. But despite his vacuous sounding voice, his zombie mannerisms and his quirky economy with the truth, this is the kind of romantic figure unbalanced schoolgirls are dying to meet.

The puzzle confusing Christina Ricci's 16-year-old sociopath in *The Opposite of Sex* is exactly that: what is the opposite of sex? That she regurgitates a homily about loving relationships on something resembling a postcard at the end of the film should not detract from Don Roos's blistering satire on political correctness. But it does, because it does not fit.

Ricci's Dedee is a wonderfully anarchic invention: all puppy fat, cleavage and acid commentary. She makes Alicia Silverstone in *Clueless* sound like a papal envoy. Fleeting her gashly trailerpark home, she throws herself on the mercy of her gay half-brother, Bill (Martin Donovan), a 35-year-old English teacher with a soft heart and a private income. Dedee is not exactly enamoured of homosexuals but that doesn't stop her seducing Bill's beefcake boyfriend, Matt (Ivan Sergei), getting pregnant and high-tailing it to Los Angeles with \$10,000 of Bill's money.

The mischievous novelty of Don Roos's film is Dedee's caustic voice-over in a film stitched entirely out of her flashbacks. As the hapless Bill and his spinster neighbour, Lucia, chase Dedee and Matt across America, Dedee mercilessly shreds their motives and sexless lives from the unreliable armchair of hindsight. It's *Thackeray* for the MTV generation.

As the money runs out and the wheels come off Dedee's quest to find something more lasting than

sex control of the film swings in Lucia and Bill's favour. It is a clever piece of manipulation by director Roos. But he loses Ricci's delicious sting and the plot starts feeling suspiciously soapy. Lisa Kudrow's fabulously repressed Lucia keeps it simmering with a mixture of semi-hysterical outrage — "My God, she (Dedee) is the human tabloid" — and later self-pity at her own inability to find a man. She is abetted by several priceless cameos from the likes of Lyle Lovett as a geeky, Lucia-infatuated sheriff, and Johnny Galecki as a mincing sennet. But the glib platitudes with which Dedee finally wraps up her awfully big adventure leave a disappointing aftertaste.

The title of Petr Zelenka's award-winning Czech film, *Buttonmen*, is derived from a most peculiar fetish. With a pair of false dentures clamped between his thighs, a distinguished-looking gentleman gets his thrills by secretly prising the buttons off upholstered seats with a few expert slaps of his buttocks. "Nothing else excites him," says his wife apologetically to a dinner party host whose antique sofa her husband has just devastated.

It never becomes clear what the thrill actually is, but this is entirely typical of the motley characters who people Zelenka's intriguing film. Here six short stories are linked by a daisy chain of coincidences. The first, a sepiatinted sequence, takes place in the tense cockpit of the *Enola Gay* just before the atom bomb is dropped on Hiroshima. The others unfold exactly 50 years later in Prague, showing how urban life is an absurd *La Ronde* of cause and effect inspired by ambition, obsession, perversion, guilt and jealousy.

A taxi driver picks up two lovers who indulge their illicit passion at high speed on the back seat. An unemployed railway guard escapes his nagging wife to lie under passing trains and spit with astonishing accuracy at the numberplates. A hygiene-obsessed psychoanalyst causes a car accident while spraying his mouth. Linked by nothing more substantial than a phone call, a taxi ride or, in the *Enola Gay's* case, a ghost, these tales of chance make a mockery of a modern world which prides itself on rationality, efficiency and the ability to launch rockets carrying sperm into outer space. For a low-budget satire this is impressive stuff, not least because of the sheer amount of comedy Zelenka squeezes from his elusively big themes.

Life is blissfully uncomplicated in Jan Kounen's splatter-movie, *Doberman*. From the moment a computer graphic of a gun-toting man with a snarling dog's head urinates on the credits, you know you can pack your brains in your boots. Here, Rufus Sewell lookalike Vincent Cassel leads a gang of ultra-violent Mad Max types on a series of bank heists armed with enough rocket launchers, mammoth handguns and exploding bullies to take the French National Guard. Against him stands Tcheky

Karyo's Gestapo cop who, when he's not pulping innocent teenagers in police cells, is snorting amphetamines and stubbing his cigar out on somebody's forehead. One step from a comic and a step away from an arcade game, *Doberman* is fabulously clichéd, grossly amusing and awfully un-PC. The only significant female role is a

gun-licking, mute, gypsy model (Monica Bellucci) who gets sexually turned on by the gratuity of it all. You would have thought that this grown-up, stylish-looking cast had better things to do. But you can't help but admire the comic ingenuity with which various goons are dispatched, shot in the groin, etc.

In his first feature, Larry David, co-creator of the sitcom *Seinfeld*, tries to pass off his comedy *Sour Grapes* as a film. He fails no one. An insufferable jock, Richie (Craig Bierko), borrows a couple of quarters from his brain-surgeon cousin Evan (Steven Weber) and promptly wins a \$436,000 jackpot on a fruit machine in Atlantic City. He refuses to divide the spoils, the cousins fall out, their families fall out, and a ludicrous game of brinkmanship ends with Evan accidentally cutting the testicles of a famous TV star, while Richie tries to bump off his doting mother.

Here things finally get amusing.

But without the canned laughter this glorified sitcom sounds hollow and awfully long stretches.

Brad Pitt and Anthony Hopkins join the fold in *Meet Joe Black*, Martin Brest's patchy remake of the 1934 classic *Death Takes a Holiday*

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Can the Jacqueline du Pré film improve on previous efforts to portray music on screen? Geoff Brown reports

What colour is C sharp minor?

Early on in the tempestuous melodrama of *Hilary and Jackie*, the new film about Jacqueline du Pré, our young heroine performs at a music competition. This is a key moment in the story's development, though our response may be blunted by what the camera gets up to. As she plays, it spins around du Pré and her cello, making her waltz and making us giddy.

Cameras always do this whenever a director, in this case Anand Tucker, gets in sight of a musician playing a solo instrument. Long ago the conjuring up of romantic ardour might have been the aim, but now all we see is a tiresome cliché.

Tucker's film then moves on, sometimes to good effect, sometimes to bad, to explore another stock movie ingredient: the artist as a suffering, if not insufferable, genius. Remember Gary Oldman's hoarse Beethoven, raging through Bernard Rose's *Immortal Beloved*? Or Tom Hulce's Mozart, reimagined as an American brat in the film of *Amadeus*? And dare I mention the name of Ken Russell, a man who loves music through and through, but does hateful things to prove it?

But this whirling camera in *Hilary and Jackie* highlights one of the many practical prob-

lems of marrying images to music, especially classical. The camera must do something when music rather than dramatic narrative fills the screen. Do you try to complement the music's supposed mood with cloudscapes, skyscrapers, cute cartoons of dancing hippopotamuses, Roger Daltry's acting barny (as in Russell's *Liostomania*), or colliding abstract spheres and spirals? How, in short, do you visualise music?

This is a question that has teased minds ever since people started to think about the relationships between the senses. The link between the eye and ear starts with the very notation of music, its patterns of symbols and staves, black notes, white notes, rectangles, hairpins, half-circles with dots. No wonder some contemporary scores have been exhibited in art galleries. Colour-coding individual sounds has also exercised minds. 'Colour organs' have been built, the first perhaps in 1734, projecting different lights as different keys were struck. Scriabin put one into his musical poem *Prometheus*. Later this century, Messiaen wrote with the colour of music and time in numerous works, including *Chronochromie*, to be performed at the Barbican on



Gary Oldman's Beethoven re-enacts the tiresome movie cliché of the artist as a suffering genius in *Immortal Beloved*

Friday during the BBC's *Messiaen weekend*. And once you struggle to describe music in words, as poet or critic, you constantly test the viability of visual metaphors. An extreme was reached in the 19th century by the German writer and composer E.T.A. Hoffmann, who dressed one of his characters in "a coat the colour of C sharp minor with an E major coloured collar"; I wonder if John Lewis has one.

Hoffmann, of course, was being deliberately perverse. But once cinema was up and running, the way was open for such fancies of synaesthesia to be tested in celluloid. The Ger-

mans in the 1920s and 1930s were particularly curious about finding visual correlations to music, though the abstract work of a film-maker like Oskar Fischinger makes you realise the perils of the exercise. On the screen, you get surging spheres, dancing lines, spiralling circles and bobbing rectangles: delightful in their way, but tied to over-familiar classical selections like Brahms's Hungarian dances, hideously recorded, or chunks of a Brandenburg Concerto. Now the strait-laced soundtracks hold the images back, which is not the case with the pieces by Fischinger and others cut to popular music and jazz improvisations.

A film-maker really gets tested if the images used to match the music are determinedly representational. The key work here is Disney's *Fantasia*, first released in 1940. The unseen Philadelphia Orchestra is conducted by Leopold Stokowski, who appears between sequences alone on the podium, conducting nothing but a sunset glow. Fischinger himself worked at a distance on the one purely abstract section, matched to Bach's *Toccata and Fugue* in D minor. But the bulk of the images consist of the Disney artists' freakish imaginings: tiresome centaurs, darting Cupids with heart-shaped bottoms, fish with come-hither eyes.

Here we enter dangerously subjective territory, though it is one familiar from childhood. Children are traditional-

ly led towards classical music through descriptive pieces such as Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*. In one way it makes sense. But music is so much more than images depicted in sound: music is structure, volume, density, rhythm, melody, counterpoint, harmony, dissonance, and any "meaning" it contains is locked into its formal constituents. How dreadful to go through life always associating Beethoven with Disney's kitsch or Oldman's scowl. Yet we had better get used to the dangers and joys of intermingling music and image. Listen to the spirit of the age. It is not the age of absolute music, constructed in laboratories with graph paper, slide rules and 12-note rows. The contemporary music in fashion today bristles with extra-musical associations, from Michael Caine's homages to American popular culture to *Messiaen's* wondrous avairy. Over the past 30 years the formal properties of cinema have fed more and more into serious compositional techniques: you get musical close-ups, flashbacks, or an anarchic collage resembling a Warner Bros cartoon. The next 30 years will doubtless see sound and image fusing even more, helped by developments in digital technology. Along the way, I just hope someone finds a different way to film a young girl playing the piano.

• *Hilary and Jackie* opens in London on Jan 22 and the rest of the country Feb 12

In the heat of the moment

DANCE

Romeo and Juliet
Festival Hall

from the first moment he sets eyes on her in the crowded ballroom you know he is doomed to follow this love wherever it will take him. He must have danced this role dozens of times, yet he still manages to give his Romeo a fresh amorous impetus. In the balcony scene the sheer pleasure of dancing with Guillerm was written all over his body.

William Trevitt, in his last role with the Royal Ballet (the being one of the five male dancers who have jumped ship mid-season), is a fine Mercutio, full of swagger and laughter, and — no mean feat this — making us believe in every minute of poor Mercutio's protracted death scene. Trevitt, Cope and Shi-Ning Liu's Benvolio (a frisky performance) formed an enjoyably boisterous alliance, while Christopher Saunders's remarkable Tybalt was their suitably vile opponent.

Nicholas Georgiadis, the ballet's original designer, has provided new sets tailored to fit the Festival Hall's problematic stage. The look is dark and claustrophobic, as if all Verona is oppressed by the gloom of the feuding Capulets and Montagues.

DEBRA CRAINE



LISTINGS

Corin Redgrave's Wilde

RECOMMENDED TODAY

Guide to arts and entertainment compiled by Mart Hargie

LONDON

ANDRAS SCHIFF: Returns only for this recital where the virtuoso Hungarian pianist displays his refined yet vigorous playing. The Schubert programme features *Arbrebois* in C, *Davidson's Sister*, *Blumenstück* in D flat and *Ständesymphonie*. Wigmore Hall (0171-935 2141). Tonight, 7.30pm. £5.

VASSA: Sheila Hancock heads a cast cast, playing the family matriarch in Garry's strong drama. Howard Davies directs Peter Gill's new version for the National's season. Almeida (0171-730 1700). Preview from tonight, 7.30pm.

SONG RECITAL: The bass-baritone Jonathan Lemm takes a break from his traditional operatic repertoire to sing a selection of songs by John Jeffry, Peter Sellars and others, also accompanies on the piano. St John's (0171-222 1061). Tonight, 7.30pm.

THE GLORY OF LIVING: British artist for the first time. Rebecca Caine's drama of enchantment and desire in the travel port. Kathryn Hunter directs. Ambassadors (0171-585 5000). Preview from tonight, 7.30pm.

LOVED OF THE FLIES: William Golding's vivid tale of terror and death on paradise island, adapted by Nigel Williams and directed by Michael Frayn. Royal Shakespeare Co. Lyric (0161-741 8701). Preview from tonight, 7.30pm. £5.

ELSEWHERE

BIRMINGHAM: Corin Redgrave performs Oscar Wilde's *De*

Sheila Hancock stars in *Vassar* at the Albery

NEW ON VIDEO

■ LOST IN SPACE

Entertainment, PG, 1998
A CAMPY, low-budget TV series of the 1960s balloons into another effects-laden Hollywood blockbuster. William Hurt and Mimi Rogers head the Space Family Robinson, whose trip to Jupiter is sabotaged, leaving them prey to a drifting ship full of hungry spiders, a space monkey called Blawp, and the very suspicious Dr Zachary Smith (another villainous role for Gary Oldman). Under the direction of Stephen Hopkins, effects, sets and costumes offer plenty for the eyes, but the screenplay is lame. Available to rent.

■ THE BITTER TEA OF GENERAL YEN

Cinema Club, PG, 1933
FRANK CAPRA may have made his name with his optimistic fables of the late 1930s and beyond, but in his earlier days he directed much more varied fare, including this gorgeously photographed, astonishing exercise in sensuous, slinky melodrama. Barbara Stanwyck stars as the missionary who falls for a Chinese war lord. Other early Capra films newly available include *American Madness* (1932), a rip-roaring drama with Walter Huston as a bank president besieged by the Depression, and the comedy *Plaza Blonde* with Jean Harlow.

■ DAY OF WRATH

BFI Films, PG, 1943
THE Danish director Carl Theodor Dreyer could not be less fashionable, but his austere sculpted images, rigorous close-ups and mix of psychology and spirituality have all helped to shape modern cinema. This is a typically stark film about witchcraft, set in a 17th-century landscape of spare grey chambers and severe black costumes, where there is no place for characters or spectators to hide. A repressive priest forces a confession of witchcraft out of an old peasant woman, whose curse brings down calamity.

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■ PETER PAN: Justin Salinger plays the title role, with David Troughton as Captain Hook, in a well-acted production that's a joy to watch.

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■ JESUS MY BOY: Tom Conti in a well-acted, well-paced comedy giving Joseph's side of the story. Apollo (0171-484 5076).

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THE TIMES THURSDAY JANUARY 14 1999

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THEATRE

Real-life tragedy on stage

THEATRE: In London and Birmingham two high-profile miscarriages of justice are relived on stage in a pair of docudramas

ARTS

TOMORROW

Record company wars

Questions that need to be asked

At the end of the Tricycle's re-creation of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry, Michael Culver, who plays the chairman, Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, asks those in his courtroom to observe a minute's silence in tribute to the murdered boy and the courage of his parents in pursuing their crusade for justice. On the first night, it wasn't just the actors who stood quietly for what seemed far longer than 60 seconds, but the reviewers, the paying punters and Stephen's father and friends. It was a curious as well as a moving episode: a recognition that, for once, we were in a theatre to ponder real-life evidence that vitally concerned the moral health of us all.

Docudrama is a worrying genre, and the Lawrence inquiry is open to misuse as a subject, especially as Macpherson prepares to publish and the papers hot up with rumours of his findings. As I drove from Kilburn, I heard on the radio

THEATRE
Doreen and Neville Lawrence (Yvonne Pascal and Tyrone De Rizzo) are the distraught parents in Richard Norton-Taylor's re-creation of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry



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man, asked to look after a key black witness when the Lawrence's launched their abortive prosecution of the alleged killers? Is there institutional racism in the Met?

Nicolas Kent's production, packed as it is with matter-of-fact acting that isn't acting, has so many unconvincingly telling moments that it seems absurd to pick out one. Why, then, do I recall Tim Woodward as the churchgoer who crossed the road to help the dying Stephen, and whose wife repeated "you are loved" as she cradled him?

Not just because such Samaritanism is intensely moving, but because even he says he suspected the boy was a mugger trying to trick him. As Macpherson will surely show, Britain has far to go before it can claim to be an equal society.

**BENEDICT
NIGHTINGALE**

In London the Tricycle Theatre is telling the story of a murder for which nobody has been found guilty in a court of law because the police omitted to proceed in the manner a democracy expects. In Birmingham the Rep's Studio Theatre is raising the memory of the Carl Bridgewater murder for which, by contrast, four men were imprisoned for 18 years until the Court of Appeal decided their convictions were "unsafe and unsatisfactory". They have not been declared innocent; however, and last month the Crown Prosecution Service decided not to prosecute the eight detectives who helped to put them away.

Meanwhile, in the Stephen Lawrence case, several senior officers whose conduct is open to criticism have conveniently retired. And last month the Royal Commission on Policing, having not touched a door handle for 18 years.

He speaks with persuasive candour of his life before young Bridgewater was killed, mining his teenage days as a clown in New South Wales for moments of comedy. He talks a little of his 17-day hunger strike, and says more about the 81

days on the roof at Gartree Prison after Kenneth Clarke rejected a petition for an appeal. But mostly his subject is the difficulty of persuading British people that injustice, police perjury and sadism in prisons could occur in their own country. Perhaps we do know this today, having grown infinitely more cynical of authority these past 18 years.

"Just to be under a tree," he confides to us, "just to feel the bark, see how the roots come out of the earth." And in the play's closing moments, a little over an hour later, he speaks of the wonder of being free to lock the doors of his car around him, having not touched a door handle for 18 years.

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Greatly aided by Jessica Dromgoole's direction as his accompaniment moves between irony and stark revelation. Robinson's story is also a testament of dignified survival. Invariably some of its arguments for reform recall Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis*, and to help us to compare the two this famous text will from today be performed in repertory with Robinson's, Celia Johnson playing the man in *Reading Gaol*. An imaginative and inspiring venture.

JEREMY KINGSTON

Curious pyjama games

I think that it is safe to say, without causing offence, that *A Special Offer* contains some of the worst acting seen on the London stage for a long time. At the start of the show a pyjama-clad couple enter awkwardly into a brochure-perfect bedroom, don and a pair of wigs and proceed to wrangle half-heartedly through a series of anodyne, sitcom relationship tableaux.

This is all horribly disturbing until one twinge that the painful gurning and hammy delivery are not all they appear to be. These people aren't just incidentally sub-sitcom: they are genuinely on the lowest possible rung of the performance ladder, principally because their bedroom is not simply show-home perfect, it is actually still in the Sharts Bedroom showroom.

What is delivered in their performance is a monstrous amalgam of pasteurised afternoon soap operas, shopping channel infomercials

MIME FESTIVAL

A Special Offer

Young Vic

and the imaginary lifestyle of the airbrushed families in a mail-order catalogue.

So far, so good: we are watching a piece of fantastical instore entertainment. But the illusion of voyeurism is undermined by Lisa Gorick's splendidly funny demonstration of exactly the kind of embarrassing daftness that real people do indulge in in the privacy of their own homes, which in her case apparently involves positioning plastic fruit in her underpants, then receiving Clintonian pleasures from a blonde wig. The shopfloor actors' real lives increasingly infringe on their performances as true protestations of love destroy their chocolate-box romance.

Yet even this apparent truth is undermined by the presence of Audrey the floor manager, whose degree of control over their performance is difficult to gauge; are they a figment of her romantic imagination? Inanimate mannequins? Performing slaves?

As is often the case with devised performances, there is much material here that feels too incidental in its inclusion to make the show entirely satisfactory. "Why," asks the programme, "is the sales assistant singing opera?" to which of course the answer is a) because it's funny and b) because she is played by Rebecca Gale who happens to be an opera singer.

Much of the scripting also still feels like an improvisation. While there is both food for thought here and some superbly comic moments, the exploration of the sinner within the bland has been done before and with greater success.

HETTIE JUDAH

Tuneful Russians revisited

CONCERTS

The Manchester audience cannot, it seems, hear too much Russian music. In spite of the BBC Philharmonic's recent overemphasis on that area of the repertoire, they still keep coming back for more — secure in the knowledge, no doubt, that with Vassily Sinaisky conducting there will be nothing half-hearted in the interpretation and nothing unidigmatic in the playing. Attendance at the Bridgewater Hall on this occasion was all the more impressive for the fact that at the head of the programme, alongside a Prokofiev concerto and a Rachmaninov symphony, there was a major work by Alfred Schnittke.

Or, perhaps it would not be entirely unfair to say, there was a travesty of a major work by Alfred Schnittke. The composer has only himself to blame for his *In Memoriam* — even though it was his great friend and ally Gennadi Rozhdestvensky who talked him into it — but this orchestral arrangement of his Piano Quintet is

nowhere near as convincing as the original. Written in memory of his mother, the Piano Quintet is an essentially intimate work that, far from being intensified in its expressive effect by the extra colouring available from the orchestra (and, unfortunately, the organ), sounds contrived on the larger scale. It is true that contrivance is not alien to Schnittke's thinking but if *In Memoriam* had been conceived for orchestra in the first place the material would have been quite different. So, although it was a timely tribute to the late composer, it was also a rather sadder one than intended.

The immediate consolation was the ex-

traordinary performance of Pekka Kuusisto in Prokofiev's Second Violin Concerto. Not yet 23 (and looking even younger), he has a wonderfully accomplished technique, an apparently fearless presence and a rare taste in matters of phrasing and colouring. Prokofiev's First Violin Concerto, which is the more youthful work, might have suited him better than the Second, which requires more in the way of classical decorum, but it was an engrossing performance even so.

As for Rachmaninov's Third Symphony, it takes even more than a fully committed Sinaisky and a well prepared and generously indulgent BBC Philharmonic to demonstrate that it is more than a highly professional artifact. But you can do a lot with a few good tunes and, beginning with the lovely cellist inspiration in the first movement, they certainly made the most of them.

GERALD LARNER

Prizewinners in good voice

Exmoor Singers
St John's, Smith Sq

Chansons exemplified the trials in store exposed chording, unprepared high notes, sustained quiet passages giving way to animated outbursts. There were blemishes here, as elsewhere, but it would be ungenerous to dwell on them when there was so much to be impressed by.

The Exmoor Singers under their music director James Jarvis gave four works of the French composer, emerging with much credit. **The Spi**

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READER OFFER THE TIMES

ART 99

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CHANGING TIMES

Carnival of Venice

Concerts

Wigmore Hall

light radiating, but never dominating the continuo group.

Peter McCarthy's double-bass and Jane Coe's cello sprang into the limelight in the finale of the Concerto for Two Violins in D minor. They led the official soloists quite a dance after the grand fugue of the central movement. But, thanks to Pinnock's buoyant direction, this too was footed feably and seemed, for much of the time, like an exuberant round dance itself.

The music-making, too, was opulent. The English Concert, of all period instrument groups, determined to show that Baroque stringed instruments can shine and sing with the best of them, and never more so than when Rachel Podger is at the helm. Her lead in the two Concertos for Four Violins, heightened the excitement of their games of pairs, with Pinnock's harpsichord and Paula Chateauneuf's

played just one. Bach's arrangement of the Op 3 No 9. After spinning a gold filigree from the tirelessly imitating sequences of the first movement, Pinnock built up a sense of concentrated meditation in the slow movement, as tiny threads of figuration were woven into the great ringing chords which provided their harmonic frame.

Bach's own secular cantata *Amore traditore* found a soulmate and, if truth be told, a superior, in Benedetto Marcello's fiercely eloquent paraphrase of Psalm 42, *Dal tribunale angusto*. Matthew Hargreaves, a bass-baritone of formidable range, plumbed the heights and depths of this prayer for justice and clemency as its words were in turn solemnised and shaken into new life by their musical setting.

Schoenberg's moving setting of Conrad Ferdinand Meyer's poem *Friede auf Erden* (Peace on Earth) provided, in its broadly arching phrases, a welcome antidote to Poulenc's short-windedness. It was good, too, to hear Weber's *Enthüllung auf leichten Kähnen*, its tonality on the verge of dissolution posing challenges for an unaccompanied choir (met credibly here as throughout).

HILARY FINCH

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Spiritual Candy by Peter Ellis, 1998

BOOKS

The flowering of passion and greed

Deborah Moggach wonders at the remarkable tale of the tulip, whose mysterious mutations brought delight and ruin from Turkey to The Netherlands

The *Tulip* is a stylish book, beautifully illustrated, and it gets off to a cracking start. Anna Pavord is one of our most inspired gardening writers and can make the building of a compost heap into high drama. The history of the tulip, in its early years, is a more ambitious subject, for the story of this flower is an extraordinary one. She writes: "Its background is full of more mysteries, dramas, dilemmas, disasters and triumphs than any besotted aficionado could reasonably expect."

The tulip grows wild in Turkey and the Turks were the first to fall under its spell. In 1574 Sultan Selim II ordered 300,000 bulbs for his palace gardens. His chief gardener was also his chief executioner, and anyone who tried to trade in bulbs at a higher price than the official one was expelled from the city, or worse. The beauty of tulips were celebrated in their names — "increaser of Joy", "Star of Felicity" — and women were wooed by them: "When a young man presents a tulip to his mistress he gives her to understand by the general colour of the flower, that he is on fire with her beauty, and by the black base, that his heart is burned to coal."

Breeders developed new forms and wrote rulebooks specifying the perfect tulip. The passion peaked during the time of Sultan Ahmed III (1703-30), a man so besotted that his reign has been renamed The Tulip Era. The Sultan spent vast amounts on lavish tulip festivals. "Thousands of tulip flowers were mounted on pyramids and towers, with lanterns and cages of singing birds hung between them. Tulips filled the flowerbeds, each marked with a label of filigree silver." Guests dressed in clothes matching the tulips and hundreds of tortoises walked around with candles on their shells. These festivals

THE TULIP
By Anna Pavord
Bloomsbury, £30
ISBN 0 7475 4296 1



would continue throughout all the nights that the tulips were in flower, and in the end caused the Sultan's downfall, when his people rebelled against such extravagance.

Meanwhile, in Europe, bulbs were fetching astonishingly high prices. The French were gripped by tulipomania, and in the early 17th century a miller exchanged his mill for one bulb of "Mère Brune". Fashionable women wore tulips in their *decolletage*. And in the Dutch Republic, speculation on tulip bulbs spiralled completely out of control!

The Dutch tulipomania is one of history's most bizarre episodes. How did such a sensible, God-fearing people succumb to such madness? I have recently explored this episode, in fiction, for it has all the ingredients of high storytelling — greed, lust for beauty, human weakness and a recklessly gathering momentum towards its own destruction. No novelist could have dreamt up such an enthralling drama.

By the early 1600s the Dutch Republic was a rich trading nation awash with capital. Growers were developing new varieties of tulips and those with rare mutations were fetching huge prices. Nobody knew how these occurred, so people started gambling on them, and this game of chance started to grip the nation. Specula-

tors ranged across the classes — bargekeepers and bummers, as well as the wealthy — and consortiums gathered in taverns where bidding was conducted in a fug of tobacco smoke. "Semper Augustus" was the rarest of all — a beautiful red and white tulip — and at the height of the madness one bulb could fetch the price of a townhouse. Tulipomania peaked in 1636 when speculation was conducted on tulip futures, and vast fortunes were both made and lost.

Priests railed against it but were powerless to stop this obsession with a flower which, in Dutch art, represented both the beauty and the fragility of life. The crash came in 1637 when the Government stepped in, but by this time the economy was seriously damaged and many lives ruined. Only recently has the secret of these mutations been discovered — they are caused by disease. If the priests had known that, how they would have thundered from their pulpits!

Although Pavord tries to keep up the pace, the story of the tulip since then slackens somewhat. In this country it fell out of fashion in the 18th century, when Capability Brown's influence replaced gardens with parks, and the story fizzles out into squabbles — between the North of England and the South, between working men's societies and professional growers. Our own Tulip War in the 1840s was caused by a quarrel over the perfect shape — whether "the pole should be a little depressed... which will give the flower a good shoulder". A very British reaction to this seductive flower which has wreaked havoc and imparted joy and which, like Cleopatra, is capable of infinite variety.

Deborah Moggach's *Tulip Fever* will be published later this year by Heinemann.



R. J. Thornton's *The Temple of Flora*, 1812: the British fashion for tulips was restrained compared with the craze that almost ruined the Dutch Republic.



Phyllis Perry's literary forebears include Toni Morrison

Slavery's legacy leaves a lasting mark

Pain, we are taught to believe, is a passing thing — our bodies are not designed to remember it. But Phyllis Perry's intense first novel is a passionate argument that we should listen to the story that pain has to tell.

The novel opens in 1994, as 34-year-old Lizzie is being released from an Atlanta mental hospital. Through the series of flashbacks and diary entries that in part make up this book the layers of the narrative — of truth and hidden lives — are slowly unfolded.

When Lizzie was 14 and the only child of black, middle-class parents, she had inherited her grandmother Grace's trunk, hidden inside a memoir dictated at the end of the 19th century by her great-great-grandmother, Bessie. With it is also a quilt, made by Grace. The images applied on the fabric tell the story of Bessie and how, as a child in Africa, she was separated

JILL WATERS
STIGMATA
By Phyllis Perry
Piatkus, £16.99
ISBN 0 7499 0458 5



from her mother and captured by slavers. Wrapped in the quilt, her head ringing with the strange words of her great-great-grandmother, Lizzie begins to dream of those vanished African days and when she wakes there is dust on her

feet and a burning sensation on her wrists.

By the time she is 20, Lizzie has begun to see her ancestors and talk in the voices of her long dead grandmothers. She feels the pain of scars which map the wounds of the manacles and whips inflicted on Bessie. But when blood begins to ooze from her injuries the doctors decide that this is dangerous self-mutilation.

Perry controls the layers of her narrative well, moving with confidence between Lizzie's life after her release and the episodes of "remembering" which confined her to a series of hospitals for 14 years. Lizzie's past incarnations as her own mother's mother and also as her great-great-grandmother are terrifying and revelatory.

The vernacular of Bessie's memoir is both haltingly earthy and lyrical. Lizzie learns "a firsthand" the agony and the losses suffered by

successive generations of women in her family. A Roman Catholic priest at one of the hospitals introduces her to the idea of stigmata. It seems to make sense. She finally comes to terms with how her new parts can bridge the gulf that exists between herself and her own mother.

At times the idea of reincarnation is a little strained — particularly in a new relationship that Lizzie forges with an artist who has painted her, although they have never met before. But as a device it serves its purpose well enough. Her publishers claim that Perry is part of the tradition of black American writing established by Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, and indeed at times there is a sense that this story has been told before. But it is a tradition of powerful writing and one that writer has every right to aspire to join.

THE French have
embraced the British
favour for ranking their
novelists. Next Wednesday
Kazuo Ishiguro will be
made a Chevalier dans
l'Ordre des Arts et des
Lettres: the next day Salman
Rushdie will be raised above
him as a Commandeur of
the same order. Well,
Rushdie did win the
Booker of Bookers for
Midnight's Children,
although practically the only
reference to *le beur* pays in
his novel is the mention of a
"sumptuous burgundy"
being drunk at a lunch party
in Highgate.

■ Chris Hartley writes to us
from the Midlands: "May I
question the validity of the
Christian answer in Roger
Scruton's review of *All in the
Mind* by Ludovic Kennedy
(Books, January 7). Why
should the scientific descrip-
tion of one substantial entity,
such as my wife, bring into
doubt her own existence while
a similarly defined descrip-
tion of another entity, *the
Earth*, cast doubt only over
the existence of their creator? I
was also bemused to learn earlier
that same day that religion
differed from science in
tradition because it does (I thought)
for the Day, R4. Some of us



are clearly missing something
but I wonder what and would
welcome clarification."

■ WHO says the literati are
polite? At Monday's T. S.
Eliot prizegiving in London
(winner: T. Hughes; Martyn
Goff, chairman of the board
of the Poetry Book Society,
thanked OUP for its
financial support — given
before it scrapped its poetry
list. Responses from poets
and pundits alike? A bout of
boos and hisses.

■ BUT interviewed in the cur-
rent issue of the *Paris Review*,
the American poet Mark
Strand takes a line that will
inflame his hard-up fellow
poetry, he says, "should have
no monetary value". Do we
hear more hissing?

■ books@the-times.co.uk

A critic who knows the way — and perhaps can drive the car, too

The blurb tells us that these essays make up "a book of passionate engagement". This officious claim, for which I feel sure we cannot blame the author, should be enough to put any reader off. Every good critic loves books and becomes deeply involved in the life inside them, and James Wood is a very good critic indeed. He has no desire to exhibit passionate engagement, whatever that is supposed to mean. So do not be put off: but enjoy instead the many good things Wood has to offer, and the brilliance with which this review collection, drawn mostly from *The New Republic*,

sense makes a great contrast with that strewise young American-by-adoption, Martin Amis.

Wood is particularly brilliant on his near contemporaries, pointing out the almost exaggerated Englishness of Julian Barnes, which is no doubt the reason why Barnes, like P. G. Wodehouse before him, has enjoyed such tremendous success among Anglophile readers in France.

Barnes is as English, it could be said, as was by stylistic adoption André Maurois, author of *Les Silences du Colonel Bramble*. Barnes is a cuddly author masquerading as a knowing one, and in that

Morrison's successes, like *The Color Purple*, but points out the ways in which her magic must nonetheless be false. "Since fiction is itself a kind of magic, the novel should not be magical... The argument against magical realism in fiction should not be an argument about what is real and what is unreal, but an argument about belief."

Wood himself believes that belief is as necessary to a novelist as water is to a growing plant, and he strongly implies that the premises of Post-Modernism, however unconscious may be their operation in the psyche of a given writer, can only be both weakening and

restricting for a novelist of real talent. The psyche of a Melville or a Tolstoy was literally geared to belief, even though Melville may have had no idea what the whole whale really signified, and Tolstoy could never rest securely in his belief that he thought he had found.

In the same spirit, Wood both profoundly respects and bitterly criticizes the character of Sir Thomas More: not a man for all seasons but one in whom the natural goodness of humour and humanitarism fought a losing battle with the ferocity of authoritarian conviction.

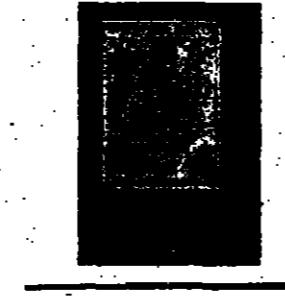
He sees belief in oneself as a

cardinal virtue in Jane Austen: "this is the greatest desire of any writer." D. H. Lawrence can achieve his own marvellous excesses with the apparent negligence of his gulls.

"Swinging like a half-born thought", Wood gives another graphic example: "In the silence it seemed he could hear the panther-like dropping of infinite snow." Why panther-like? It is perfect, and yet inexplicable — "simply abstract" as Wood observes, and yet physically immediate.

That perception gives a very good idea of his own virtues as a critic.

JOHN BAYLEY



BOOKS

Never mind the creativity, feel the sweat

Do creative writing courses really add to the fund of literature? On the evidence of two new works, they at least offer hope

The young concert pianist sits down at his instrument. There is an expectant hush. Will he really be as good as they say, this strapping now embarking on a musical career? Surely most of what you hear is hype. And then, when his hands are poised above the keyboard to begin, a whisper goes round the auditorium. Did you hear, says one to another, he actually practices? I heard, says someone else, he has had lessons. Practising? Lessons? Whatever next? A ripple of disgust moves through the audience. Where's the natural talent in that?

A laughable scenario, perhaps. But what if the artist in question is not a pianist but a writer? What if that writer has taken part in a 'creative writing course' — or, even worse, has a degree in the subject? What is an 'MA in creative writing'? What can that possibly mean?

No more than our young pianist's degree in musicology. Neither is a guarantee of success: only evidence of the student's commitment.

ment to his or her art. The old inspiration/inspiration ratio, in my experience, still holds true: under-taking a degree in creative writing — there are now more than 20 MAs running in Great Britain alone — at least demonstrates a willingness to expend the necessary quarts of sweat.

Resistance to the teaching of creative writing in this country has lessened considerably since Malcolm Bradbury started up the first MA in the subject at the University of East Anglia nearly 30 years ago — with a single student, a young man named Ian McEwan.

Resistance in Britain, Bradbury points out, was always bound to be greater than it ever was in the United States, Canada or Australia where creative writing courses, from the 19th century on, existed as part of a conscious effort to form a literary culture.

But the British already had a literary culture, thank you very much: nobody had to sit Chaucer and Shakespeare in a fawn-bound classroom and teach them how to write, did they? Of course not: and what

Shakespeare wrought could never be "taught", as such. But — and here I will come out of the closet and confess I speak from personal experience — there can be few things as valuable to a writer as the goodwill, companionship and insight of other writers. When I did my MA in Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia that was what I took away and continue to keep with me. Some are happy to struggle alone; for some, the knowledge that the struggle goes on in others' heads is infinitely useful — and comforting.

The East Anglian course, has, since its inception, had a high profile. Andrew Motion has taken over from Malcolm Bradbury; writers like Rose Tremain, Kazuo Ishiguro, Deirdre Madden, Anne Enright and McEwan, to name a few, have been associated with it.

Now, published a few days apart, are two more books that bear the stamp of the course. A collection of short stories, *It Cracks Like Breaking Skin*, by Stephen Foster is published by Faber & Faber (£9.99; ISBN 0 571 19506 7) and a



Erica Wagner

novel, *Columbus Day*, by Janette Jenkins (Chatto & Windus, £10; ISBN 0 701 16831 5). What have these two writers learned? Should we value them any more highly because they have served formal apprenticeships to their craft?

Unfortunately, Foster's book bears some of the scars of creative-writingitis. My first question was: does it? *It Cracks Like Breaking Skin* has a good sound: but does

breaking skin, after all, crack? Writing that is carefully thought out as well as polished — and this is certainly polished prose in its minimalist way — shouldn't make the reader ask this kind of question.

These loosely linked stories depict, for the most part, a young man's growing up in the Midlands: they have the kind of flat, studied casualness that is in danger of giving the adjective Carver-esque a bad name. Raymond Carver's art was so apparently simple that the temptation can be to believe that it's possible to write bluntly about not very much and still get a story at the end of it. But Carver's art was subtle, not simple, and this is just not true.

Foster has fallen into the trap: most of these short sequences (there are 17 of them in a 150-page book) are vignettes rather than tales. They read like the beginning or the middle of something, but nothing whole. Character isn't given too much of a chance here: caricature. There is, however, a voice lurking here: will the mostly central character of Hewitt become the protagonist of the novel on which Foster is apparently at work? It will be worth finding out.

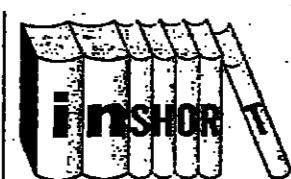
Janette Jenkins does have a story in her, and her first novel captures the unswerving love of a child with

truth and tenderness. It is narrated by Jess, whose mother Olivia's search for her own lost father — he disappeared when she was eight — tips Olivia into madness.

The depiction of madness is a tall order for a novelist, and too often Olivia seems, stereotypically, a vague, pale wraith in a long, unfashionable dress. What emerges as most compelling in this novel is the love that Jess's father, Roland, maintains for his very much younger, and very much damaged, wife.

oland's development in the book from an unknown quantity smelling of whisky and leather to a movingly willing and inventive spouse draws the reader through this novel quite happily. Jenkins flounders rather towards the end, but that's not an uncommon failing in a first novel: this is a fine debut.

Whether either of these books would have been any worse or any better had their authors not "learned" creative writing is impossible to judge. It is possible, however, to believe that the much-discussed death of the British novel may be held off by the evidence creative writing courses provide of a wealth of young writers eager to learn their craft and turn it to art.



Tangled up and blue

THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

By Don Hannah

Granta, £9.99

ISBN 1 86207 232 9

IN a small Canadian town lives get tangled up and blue. Don Hannah, the award-winning playwright, has written a wonderfully sinister novel, almost Gothic, in which all the wrong people seem to meet for all the right reasons. Sandy Whyte, community linchpin, finds his heartstrings after he spies a young boy on his property. Then there is Gloria, his cleaner, still considered a bit of an oddity for claiming, as a child, to have seen the Virgin Mary. And Raymond, her brother, who thinks he has seen a similar vision in Sandy's house. Hannah writes with smooth precision, making the ordinary seem anything but.

Good ol' boy

LOUISIANA POWER AND LIGHT

By John Dufresne

Vintage, £6.99

ISBN 0 09 927747 6

DUFRESNE'S revelatory tale begins in Monroe, Louisiana — City of Steady Habits, Crossroads to Pipelines, Corrugated Paper Capital of the North Delta Parishes, elevation 65 ft, population 56,600 — where telling tales of the Fontanas is as natural as bathing in the Mississippi. Initially, we are introduced to the line — which includes Peregrine Fontana, who sired two albinos sons before he was drowned by Yankee soldiers, and Mangham and Bosco Fontana, who claimed to be the Lost Tribe of Israel. But the main thrust involves the family's last survivor, Billy Wayne Fontana. As this wildman turned free spirit hits the rocky road there is plenty to make us laugh.

Futurescape

ENDLAND STORIES

By Tim Etchells

Pulp Books, £8.99

ISBN 1 901072 12 6

THIS may be just another millennium collection, but Tim Etchells is not just another author. *Endland Stories* is a set of tales based around the fictional country of Endland where the scenery is taken straight from a low-budget *Blade Runner*. A woman renames herself Silence in want of a bit of peace, the goddess Helen and the god Apollo 12 give birth to twin boys, Porridge and Spacula, and even the tears people shed have a copyright. But it is not just in the trimmings that Etchells succeeds. He brilliantly welds together archaic language with computer-speak to create a funny, caustic collection.

ALEX O'CONNELL

Goodbye to all that's me

The autobiography of Lucia Graves

lacks focus, says Ilan Stavans

Lucia Graves is a daughter of the poet Robert Graves from his second marriage. In this, her first book, ignited by a surgical operation her mother underwent in Barcelona in 1996, she mainly dwells upon her legacy.

Her primary themes, indeed, are her own upbringing in Majorca, where she made her home as a child with her family in 1946, her education in Geneva and England, her marriage to a Spanish musician in 1965, and her enlightening if perplexing return to the Iberian peninsula; and also in contrast, the plight of orphans during the Spanish Civil War, through Franco's regime, and under democracy. This duality — Spain and herself, portrayed as siblings growing up simultaneously — results in an utter lack of focus, for whenever possible Graves strives to profile significantly "I" to profile significantly

A WOMAN UNKNOWN
Voices from a Spanish Life
By Lucia Graves
Virago, £18.99
ISBN 1 86049 487 0



Portrait of a poet's family: left to right, Lucia Graves, aged 19, brothers Tomás and Juan, her mother Beryl and Robert Graves at home in Majorca.

these profiles are inadvertently presented as distractions.

The argument might be made, of course, that such distractions are precisely what the book is about: a tapestry of women's journeys, structured as a Scheherazade-like tale of tales wherein the primary teller delivers a mosaic of "voices from a Spanish life" still struggling to find their own space.

But the only voice that really matters, the only one with any weight, is that of Graves herself: and it is unfortunate that parallel stories, marginal in their essence to the core of the tale, are inserted to enhance her own odyssey.

Not all is misconceived in *A Woman Unknown*, though.

Graves's style is harmonious, cinematic, even hypnotising; it seems built against the swift, egotistical texture of *Goodbye to All That*, its impact emerging not from the strength of the author's personality but from the honest desire to res-

cue memory from oblivion. Her descriptions of Spain's industrialisation, its progressive modernisation, are often enthralling. Her chapters on her bicultural self, part British, part Iberian, not at war with each other but in a continual dialogue, are insightful, as are her reflections on the place of domestic life at the end of this millennium.

These sections are invaluable to understand how dramatically different in nature are

Spanish and British civilisations. They should be required reading to those interested in foreigners' views of the Hispanic world, alongside those by Malcolm Lowry, Graham Greene and Peter Matthiessen. Among Graves's best chapters is "The Translation Class", about her experiences as a student, first at the French Lycée in Kensington, then at Oxford, and the process through which she became her father's Spanish translator. This seg-

ment highlights not only the pre-eminence of both tongues — Spanish and English — in her mind but the symbolic triumph of the former, the weak one of the two, over its mighty counterpart, a motif at the heart of her volume.

Robert Graves only makes

cameo appearances, the ghost of Hamlet's father casting a shadow not fully digested. This also leaves the reader satisfied. What is missing, overall, is a centre of gravity.

IN metro THIS SATURDAY:
Francis Gilbert enters the dark world of Lesley Glaister

ALSO: Hanif Kureishi tells metro how he writes

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Kiss off: Peter Mandelson

the book overwhelmingly presents him.

The truth is that all who aspire to achieve great things in politics need to be skilful operators as well as dreamers, and the master-politicians are those who disguise their activities in the former category. Mandelson's trouble is that he has been so conspicuous as an operator that the principled side of his has been obscured.

Mandelson implies that, partly because of his homosexuality, he is a rootless individual. During the period of relative leisure that he now faces he has the chance to demonstrate his true quality. Adversity may turn out to be his friend.

JOHN GRIGG

Campaign biographies have never been the most durable form of literature — but until recent times their purpose was to boost the careers of politicians and the fortunes of their parties. Now the genre has changed, and they have become a function of party fighting. Paul Routledge's test book is a campaign biography directed against Peter Mandelson, and by extension against Tony Blair. Even more publication it has forced Mandelson's resignation from the Cabinet and some are saying that it will end his exclusion from power in an indefinite period, perhaps forever.

This is more doubtful, and it would, indeed, be wrong for the career of a serious politician to be destroyed by such a harsh portrayal, whose ideological motives are obvious.ough the book's apparent beneficiary is Gordon Brown, in fact it is clearly an attack by Labour on New Labour. Of course, Mandelson has a lot of faults as well as outstanding talents, and he has provided plenty of ammunition for a hostile biographer. It was, moreover, unfortunate for him that, after the landslide 1997 victory, his first job in Government (as Minister without Portfolio) offered all too much scope for his manipulative and cynical tendencies, while giving him the opportunity

Silence is golden — and it can be speech

JEAN ATTICHHISON
I SEE A VOICE
Language, Deafness & the Senses - a Philosophical History
By Jonathan Ree
HarperCollins, £19.99
ISBN 0 00 255793 2



speech today are affected by various incompatible assumptions, which the author tries to unravel. Well-documented is the clash between those who assume the spoken word is related to the soul and spirituality, and those who regard the voice as either gross or irrelevant. This has carried over into the 20th-century controversy between the "oralists", who want the deaf to learn to speak, and the "gesturalists", who support sign language.

The "gesturalists" have "won", as the book points out, in that sign language is now rightly regarded as "full" language, which, like written language, uses a different medium from spoken language.

Yet signing in the late 20th century is disappointingly glossed over. No information is given of the recent sign language that has developed spontaneously among the deaf in Nicaragua, for example, and current work comparing first and second generation signers is mentioned only in passing.

Overall, the central historical chapters are clear and enlightening. But they are sandwiched between turgid first and last sections, which veer between pomposity and repetitive obviousness. Yet, these early and late sections are not without value, and the myth of the "five senses" is usefully dispelled. Perhaps readers should behave like greedy sandwich-eaters: gobble up the filling, but take only intermittent nibbles at the crusts.

JOHN

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■ THEATRE tickets will be a bonus to those booking a night at the five-star Conrad Hilton at Chelsea Harbour, London, with the Hotel Directory. The package costs £125 and is available until the end of February. Details: 0181-770 0123.

■ A MUSICAL weekend featuring the works of Mozart takes place at a Peak District guesthouse from January 29 to 31 and can be booked through Countrywide for £96. Details: 0161-446 2226.

■ ROMANTIC cottages are ideal for celebrating Valentine's Day and some with appropriate names are available from English Country Cottages. Lovelays near St Austell, Cornwall, is spacious, sleeps four, and costs £363 for a week from February 13. For a loving couple, Snuggle in the Cottages might be more suitable. Designed for two and private, it is available from February 8 for a week for £267. Details: 0870-585 1155.

■ CONNEMARA for a little magic and romance is on offer from Irish Ferries Holidays with a five-night break from February 11 costing £169, including return ferry travel with car, two nights B&B in a Dublin hotel and three in Connemara. Details: 0990 170000.

■ AROMATIC massage oils smoothed on to the sounds of romantic music is the Malmeson hotels' idea of the perfect Valentine's break. The group's hotels in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester and Newcastle are offering the oils and accommodation in rooms with CD players from £75 a night for couples on February, 12, 13 and 14. Details: 0141-221 1052.

■ GLENN HODDLE, the England football coach, may need more than a faith healer when his side take on France, the world champions, at Wembley on February 10. For those importers who live in hope of famous victory, Goldenrail offering tickets to the game at a night's B&B at the



World-beaters: see England play France at Wembley



Last-minute opportunities to go cross-country skiing are available: a week in a Swiss three-star hotel will cost from £467

EUROPE

CROSS-COUNTRY skiing can be one of the most rewarding winter sports and some last-minute opportunities are available. The Swiss picture-postcard village of Kandersteg is the base for Headwater Holidays, offering three half-days of langlauf ski lessons and a ski pack. A week's half-board at a three-star hotel from January 23 and 30 costs £467 for adults and £336 for children under 12, based on four people travelling together by car and including ferry crossings. Details: 01606 813367.

■ TRADITIONAL skiing is available at a variety of resorts for a week from January 30 with the Skiers Travel Bureau. The options range from half-board at Borovets, Bulgaria, for £227, Three Valleys, France, for £249, both with flights from Gatwick, to a week in a catered chalet at Saalbach, Austria, for £239, includ-

ing a flight from Manchester. Details: 01858 468858.

■ SKI independently across country through the Jura mountains on the Franco-Swiss border, suggests Intratravel, which has availability from January 23. The price of £498 includes return Heathrow to Geneva flights, six nights' half-board in three hotels, luggage transportation as well as ski hire. Details: 01653 628862.

■ HALF-TERM skiing holidays for extended families or two or three together are on offer from Direct Line Holidays. Chalets sleeping 12 to 14 at Châtel in the Portes du Soleil are available for a week from February 13 and will cost £589 a person, including half-board, return flights from Gatwick or Manchester and ski guiding. Child discounts are also available. Details: 0181-239 8100.

■ ALICANTE for a week for

£79 looks like this week's cheapest winter sun offer and comes from Eclipse. It includes a return flight from Gatwick on January 23 and a room in a two-star hotel. An extra week costs only £30 more. Details: 0990 010203.

■ MALTA holidays are also available at discounts for a week from January 29. Malta Direct Travel offers self-catering in a St Paul's Bay apartment from £167, based on five sharing, and B&B at a five-star resort hotel for £291. Flights are from Gatwick. Details: 0181-785 3233.

■ BRUSSELS breaks are available again with Eurotours, starting from January 21, and feature two nights' B&B at the Hilton Hotel and return Eurostar travel for £139. Details: 0181-289 8889.

■ MADEIRA is usually temperate in the winter, and from next month Explore Worldwide begins a new series of

eight-day tours featuring scenic walks, including an ascent of the island's highest mountain and, of course, time to sample the island's most famous product. The holidays cost from £490 with return flights and B&B. Details: 01252 760100.

■ ANTALYA, the Turkish resort with palm-lined boulevards, parks and a leading archaeological museum, is available for winter breaks with Metak Holidays. Fly from Stansted on a choice of dates and stay a week in the Sheraton Hotel, which has a range of sports facilities, for £469. Details: 0171-935 6961.

■ ELAT is available for £199 for a week but you must move fast to catch this offer from First Choice: the flight leaves Gatwick on Sunday. The price includes B&B at a two-star property in the Red Sea resort. Details: 0870-750 0100.

■ RESTED footballers and re-employed managers are now returning from the Caribbean so there is room for the rest of us with a few good high-season deals available. Tropical Places is offering a fortnight at the three-star Bay Gardens in St Lucia for £599

this month with Sunday flights from Gatwick, and Thomas Cook Holidays has a week's all-inclusive at Club Antigua for £779, a £150 saving, available between January 25 and the end of February. Details: Tropical Places, 01342 825223; Thomas Cook, 01733 418450.

■ THE MALDIVES for £529 for a week's all-inclusive holiday is among late deals available from Lunn Poly. This Air-tours package starts with a flight from Manchester on January 24. Details from Lunn Poly Holiday Shops.

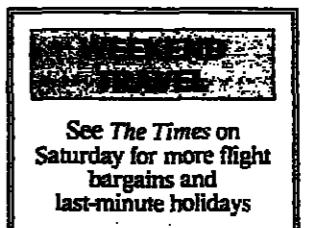
■ COA is always intriguing but from February 13 to 15 it will be more bizarre than ever with a carnival, promising three days of music, dancing, parades and general mayhem. They can all be enjoyed on a fortnight's package with Somak Holidays which starts with a flight from Gatwick on February 5, includes B&B in a resort hotel and costs £429. Details: 0181-423 3000.



See New York for £319

■ NEW YORK is seldom available at a saving but Fury Holidays has included a package to the city in its new year sales. A return Virgin Atlantic flight from Heathrow and three nights at the Hotel Pennsylvania, close to Madison Square Garden and Broadway theatres, now costs from £319. Details: 0181-466 0222.

■ All prices based on two travelling together and sharing a room, unless otherwise stated.



See The Times on Saturday for more flight bargains and last-minute holidays

EXCLUSIVE READER OFFER

THE TIMES

SAVE UP TO 20% ON MILLENNIUM LUXURY CRUISE



Times readers are offered a 10% discount on the brochure prices of this superb cruise. Readers who have been Cunard cruise passengers in the past will receive an additional 10% off, giving a saving of 20% on brochure prices.

Itinerary		
24 nights. Departs UK on December 18, 1999, and returns to the UK on January 11, 2000		
Date	Day	Port
Dec 18	Sat	Depart Southampton, UK
Dec 22	Wed	Ponta Delgada, Azores
Dec 25	Sat	Christmas Day at sea
Dec 28	Tues	St Kitts
Dec 29	Wed	Roseau, Dominica
Dec 30	Thur	St Lucia
Dec 31	Fri	Barbados
MILLENNIUM 2000		
Jan 01	Sat	New Year's Day at sea
Jan 07	Fri	Madeira
Jan 11	Tues	Arrive Southampton UK

JOIN THE CARONIA ON HER 24-NIGHT MILLENNIUM MAIDEN VOYAGE TO THE CARIBBEAN

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For further details send coupon to: THE TIMES MILLENNIUM CARIBBEAN CRUISE OFFER, VICTORIA TRAVEL SERVICE LTD, 30 Howell Road, Sandi Green, Birmingham B45 8NE.

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ABTA and ATOL bonded

CHANGING TIMES

BOXING: TYSON SHOWS LITTLE SIGN OF OVERCOMING HIS PROBLEMS BEFORE RETURN TO THE RING

FROM SRIKUMAR SEN
BOXING CORRESPONDENT
IN LAS VEGAS

MIKE TYSON returns, on Saturday, to the ring here where he disgraced himself. While most sportsmen would face such a prospect with remorse or trepidation, at least, Tyson, it seems, feels little or no pain for the despicable act of biting off a piece of Evander Holyfield's ear in that infamous world heavyweight championship bout in June 1997.

How will the crowd that chanted "Holy, Holy" that night receive Tyson when he enters the ring to face his first opponent in 19 months, Francois Botha, of South Africa? It matters little to Tyson.

The once-respected boxing historian said: "Muhammad Ali set the style, but there has never been a fighter as big as Mike Tyson. Yeah, I lost to Holyfield. I bit his ear. He's an outstanding fighter, but he's not Mike Tyson."

Tyson is still raging at the world that does not understand him, or his actions, inside and outside the ring. Perhaps that is why he finds it necessary to belittle the man who twice gave him the hiding of his life.

Tyson, who had to be cleared by a team of psychiatrists before getting his licence back from the Nevada State Athletic Commission, said: "I'm not supposed to be here now. I was supposed to be finished after Robin Givens [his first wife]. Most of the guys I've fought are in oblivion now and they are fighting to pay crack habits. I've been as low as a man could ever be. But I'm here."

While Tyson is happy to accept the millions that come to him as a result of publicity in the press, he is unable to handle media attention. He still lies his replies to journalists he does not like with evasions, or hides behind ramblings of a pseudo-intellectual nature, talking about God, Machiavelli and quoting Nietzsche.

It seemed for a moment, a couple of weeks ago, that the break from his old management of Don King, John Horne and Rory Holloway was beginning to help him to understand his problems. He impressed the readers of *The New York Times* when he appeared to show that he was capable of considerate behaviour. "I want to get my life



Tyson needed clearance from psychiatrists before being allowed to box again and serious doubts about his conduct remain after recent outbursts

stabilised," he told the newspaper. "I've been a real jerk."

"I don't know how my wife has been able to stay married to me. She is such a dignified woman, who is not used to the stuff I've put her through."

Then, a couple of days later, Tyson was predicting the death of Botha. "I expect him to go down cold," he said. "I expect him to die." You could understand what the psychiatrists meant when they said Tyson had "a constellation of neuro-behavioural deficits".

This evaluation was further illustrated the other day, here, when Tyson denigrated Holyfield and Lennox Lewis, and insulted sports fans by saying: "If I fight on the same night, they're out of a job. They can't sell out Madison Square Garden. I can sell out Madison Square Garden masturbating."

"I am the champ. These guys talk about me like a god. I am the champ when I'm not the champ. When they are the champs, I'm the king. I'm

Mike Tyson and Mike Tyson is gonna be Mike Tyson."

Tyson refused to believe that the Lewis-Holyfield contest at Madison Square Garden, still nearly eight weeks away, was already sold out while his bout with Botha at the MGM

Grand Garden, just two days away, has still to see the "House Full" notice.

These utterances underline the belief that Tyson, outside the ring, is bigger than Tyson, inside it, and boxing is no longer a sport but a deception

where outrageous comments, coupled with knockouts of hand-picked opponents, take in the gullible. A pity, because as a boxer, Tyson is not a fraud. For the past six weeks, he has been working in Arizona with his new trainer,

Tommy Brooks, who was in Holyfield's corner on that fatal June night. "We've gone back to basics. We're getting back to where he used to be," Brooks said.

Throughout his troubled existence in the past 19 months, Tyson has always had the memory of his legal guardian, Cus D'Amato, to sustain him, so the news that Tyson's accountant had found that D'Amato had left him \$200,000 (£122,000) in a savings account should lift his spirits.

"I guess Cus thought I would blow all my money," Tyson said, laughing. "When I was living crazy, I'd spend \$200,000 in one night on belts, underwear, champagne and girls. To me, \$200,000 is insignificant, even if I was doing bad. But when they told me he had left, it was like, wow. You could not give me a million dollars for that account now. What Cus did was truly overwhelming."

THE World Cup holders are finding life here more difficult than they would like. Deprived by injury of Aravinda De Silva, their leading batsman, they have lost both games in this triangular series, the second more comprehensively than the first. Australia thumped them at the SCG, making the highest total any side has made batting second in 97 one-day internationals on this ground.

Adam Gilchrist, their captain-wicketkeeper-batsman, smashed a superb 131 from 118 balls, having reached his half-century in only 37. The first of his two sixes, a huge heave to mid-wicket, punished the last ball of Muralitharan's first over. After that insult, Sri Lanka must have known there was no coming back. His second six, off Jayawardene, took him to his fourth one-day hundred in a year, since he was promoted to opener.

Muralitharan, the off spinner, with the double-jointed wrist action, has been in the wars since the team arrived in Australia. At Brisbane last Sunday against England, and again in Sydney, his appearance brought jeers and cries of "no ball" when he released the ball. Muralitharan put on a brave face on things, and he will have to, because the feeling persists in these parts that that is a "chucker".

The silencing of Darren Hair, the umpire who罚ed Muralitharan seven times for throwing during the Melbourne Test four years ago, has fooled nobody. Hair will be charged with breaching the International Cricket Council's code of conduct, for making remarks about the bowler's "diabolical" action in a recent book, but his decision to stand down from this series, to exempt the Australian Cricket Board from disbarring him, does the game no credit.

Relations between Australia and Sri Lanka have not been good since that tour and great was the rejoicing when the Sri

FROM MICHAEL HENDERSON IN SYDNEY

SYDNEY (Sri Lanka won last): Australia beat Sri Lanka by eight wickets

THE World Cup holders are finding life here more difficult than they would like. Deprived by injury of Aravinda De Silva, their leading batsman, they have lost both games in this triangular series, the second more comprehensively than the first. Australia thumped them at the SCG, making the highest total any side has made batting second in 97 one-day internationals on this ground.

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Relations between Australia and Sri Lanka have not been good since that tour and great was the rejoicing when the Sri

Lankans won the last World Cup, beating Australia in the final three years ago. "Last time they were out here, there was a bit of hostility and snub," Shane Warne, who is leading Australia in these games, said.

Warne took two wickets yesterday though the captain had to do without Brad Young, his left-arm spinner, who smashed his knee and ankle against the perimeter board in a vain attempt to save a boundary.

The Australia fielding lacked distinction as Jayasuriya and Tilakaratne made the half-centuries that carried Sri Lanka to a score of 259 for

SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA		1st Innings	2nd Innings
S T Jayasuriya c Gilchrist b Johnson	65	100	100
D W Muralitharan c Johnson b Johnson	22	100	100
M S Aluwattu c Waugh b Warne	16	100	100
H P Tilakaratne run out	73	100	100
A Jayawardene run out	26	100	100
P M Jayawardene c Gilchrist b Johnson	2	100	100
U D Chandana b Fleming	1	100	100
R S Muttiahm c Gilchrist b McGrath	1	100	100
J C Gajadeva c McGrath b Johnson	15	100	100
M Muralitharan run out	0	100	100
Extras (2 b, 10 w, 5 lb, 5 nc)	14	100	100
Total (2 wickets, 50 overs)	259	100	100
G P Wicksman c McGrath b Johnson	0	100	100
F A Gajadeva c McGrath b Johnson	0	100	100
P A Jayawardene c McGrath b Johnson	0	100	100
R P Muttiahm c McGrath b Johnson	0	100	100
G S Jayawardene c McGrath b Johnson	0	100	100
D W Muralitharan c McGrath b Johnson	0	100	100
Extras (2 b, 10 w, 5 lb, 5 nc)	100	100	100
Total (2 wickets, 50 overs)	259	100	100
AUSTRALIA			
1st Innings	313	313	313
M E Waugh c McGrath b Johnson	63	313	313
R T Ponting not out	0	313	313
D J Boon c McGrath b Johnson	0	313	313
Extras (2 b, 10 w, 5 nc)	7	313	313
Total (2 wickets, 46.1 overs)	320	313	313
G S Waugh c McGrath b Johnson	63	313	313
D J Boon c McGrath b Johnson	0	313	313
R T Ponting not out	0	313	313
Extras (2 b, 10 w, 5 nc)	7	313	313
Total (2 wickets, 46.1 overs)	320	313	313
AUSTRALIA			
1st Innings	313	313	313
M E Waugh c McGrath b Johnson	63	313	313
R T Ponting not out	0	313	313
Extras (2 b, 10 w, 5 nc)	7	313	313
Total (2 wickets, 46.1 overs)	320	313	313
SRI LANKA			
1st Innings	131	131	131
M E Waugh c McGrath b Johnson	16	131	131
R T Ponting not out	0	131	131
Extras (2 b, 10 w, 5 nc)	7	131	131
Total (2 wickets, 46.1 overs)	131	131	131
AUSTRALIA			
1st Innings	131	131	131
M E Waugh c McGrath b Johnson	63	131	131
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THE TIMES THURSDAY JANUARY 14 1999

RACING: GOVERNMENT'S REACTION VITAL TO FUTURE OF INDUSTRY

Savill calls for Tote to be transferred to BHB

BY RICHARD EVANS
RACING CORRESPONDENT

THE importance of New Labour's attitude to racing in the run-up to the millennium was underlined yesterday as the British Horseracing Board (BHB) added a request to assume control of the Tote to racing calls for major changes in the sport's finances.

Peter Savill, the BHB chairman, is set to meet government ministers soon and their reaction to racing's growing list of demands will determine whether the sport can begin to control its own destiny — or continue to be blighted by inadequate funding.

The BHB's wish to control the Tote was made public at the board's annual forum in London yesterday, attended by racing's main organisations, bookmakers and government officials.

The Government is considering whether the Tote should be privatised, but Savill recalled the recommendation of the Commons home affairs select committee in 1997 to transfer the Tote to racing when there was a suitable racing authority in place. The BHB, established in 1993, now fulfilled the criteria, he said.

"At a time when the Tote is making around £20 million profit per year before its contribution to racing and when the BHB has made such a strong case for an additional annual



Savill: robust presentation

investment of £105 million, it would be insensitive of Government to contemplate annexing the Tote and selling it to commercial interests.

"There is no evidence that Government owns the Tote; no Government money has been given to the Tote, either on its foundation or subsequently; and the Tote was founded specifically to raise money for racing." The Tote's endorsement claim, presumably endorsed by the Home Office, is 'Bet with the Tote, our profits stay in racing'.

Savill added: "The inference from these points is that racing has an obvious proprietary right to the Tote. The BHB, on behalf of British racing now asks Government to move to formalise that right and give BHB control of the Tote."

The surprise announcement

came after Savill reiterated racing's demands for an extra £80 million from an increased share of betting turnover. Racing would not be fobbed off in the forthcoming levy negotiations "by offers of ten, 20 or even 30 per cent increases in the levy as has been suggested in the press".

Tristan Ricketts, chief executive of the BHB, said: "While recognising that such cases are intrinsically complex, the board shares the view that it is in the best interests of racing, and of those directly involved, that the investigation should be brought to a conclusion as quickly as possible."

The BHB's Financial Plan had detailed racing's need for an extra £105 million a year — £25 million of that coming via self-help. The betting industry's profits had swollen from £100 million in 1985 to £1.5 billion in 1998, and the on-course industry was worth more than £3 billion on recent valuations of Coral and GUS Denney.

Savill added: "The betting industry is getting richer. In 1998, it made more than three times the profit it made three years earlier. It can clearly afford to pay a lot more and the Levy Board and the Government must ensure it does."

If the levy negotiations between bookmakers and racing end in stalemate — which is certain if Savill sticks to his guns — Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, will determine the outcome, and racing's fate will again be in ministerial hands.

In the long run, Savill said, the levy system needed to be replaced by a commercial transaction between bookmakers and racing involving the selling of the racing picture signal. "The signal system is the financing system of the future, the levy system the uncommercial system of past."

The huge task Savill faces is not only persuading the Government of the merits of racing's case, but winning its backing for change. He concluded: "We do not wish to be constantly knocking on Government's door with requests for more money, any more than Government wants to involve us in the commercial affairs of industry. We want to work with Government to assist its withdrawal from commercial matters."



Spencer guides Magic Combination to victory in the Royal Mail Novices' Hurdle at Kempton Park yesterday

Curley gives top marks to Spencer

BY CHRIS MCGRATH

MAGIC Combination to success over timber at Kempton Park.

"He's the best there's been since Martin Moloney," Curley said. "The thing about Moloney was that he was great over jumps and on the flat. This is only a kid but he's a champion. He's like Frankie (Dettori) was at 18."

Curley, the cherubic teenager introduced to the big time by Stack last season, yesterday inspired an endorsement from Curley that was unimited even by his theatrical standards.

Spencer, 18, is spending the winter refining what are clearly instinctive gifts on the British all-weather circuit, but yesterday showed their range by partnering

a child and last May boldly put the apprentice up on his volatile filly, Tarascon, in the Irish 1,000 Guineas. Spencer proved more than a match for his seniors.

Admittedly, it was easier to shine yesterday, when Curley produced the well-backed Magic Combination to canter in the slipstream of the favourite, Norlandic (Dettori), before cruising clear in the straight.

Tarascon, disappointing at Ascot last time, sets out to retrieve the promise of his impressive Cheltenham win in the John Bull Chase at Wincanton today. But Prince's chasing debut, scheduled for Wetherby, has been postponed until Ascot on Saturday.

Stack has known Spencer since he was

THUNDERER	
1.40 Otago Heights	3.10 Tamarindo
2.10 SARAS DELIGHT (nap)	3.45 Mr Jarvis
2.40 Normanby Road	4.15 Brush With Time

Timekeeper's top rating: 4.40 CROKER.

GOING: SOFT	TOTE JACKPOT MEETING	SIS
1.40 SPETTISBURY NH NOVICES HURDLE (2.514; 2m) (14 runners)		

101 1/2 BORO SOVEREIGN 10 (0.85) J Wilson 7-11-5 1/2 Huddersfield 5-1-5 M A Ricketts 28
2/2 BROWNIES BOY 42 (0.85) J Wilson 7-11-5 1/2 Huddersfield 5-1-5 M A Ricketts 28
04 CALICO 10 (0.85) C Peppiatt 5-1-5 1/2 Huddersfield 5-1-5 M A Ricketts 28
125 1/2 HONEYMOON 10 (0.85) G McCourt 5-1-5 1/2 Huddersfield 5-1-5 M A Ricketts 28
105 40-5 JACKSON'S HOLE 10 (0.85) P French 5-1-5 1/2 Huddersfield 5-1-5 M A Ricketts 28
106 1/2 STAG HUNTER 10 (0.85) J Wilson 7-11-5 1/2 Huddersfield 5-1-5 M A Ricketts 28
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Wilson: his record time against the Gazelle Boy is a long way from being eclipsed today

Today we unmask one of the greatest unsung heroes in the history of British sport. He is the man who lit the flame of athletic ambition for thousands of schoolboy with dreams of being champions by bringing them the adventures of an outrageous sportsman, record-breaker and role model.

Week after week for years he chronicled the exploits of the mysterious Wilson of the Wizard, regarded by many as the undisputed champion of comic book supermen.

A couple of weeks ago I wrote about the great Wilson after rediscovering a battered old copy of a book entitled *The Truth About Wilson* by W.S.K. Webb. I revealed that William Wilson may well still be alive at the age of 203, but that many of his astonishing world

records set in the 1940s and 50s have been matched or overtaken by today's real-life athletes.

This provoked a torrent of response from *Times* readers, some of them very distinguished and a lot of them no longer in the full flush of spike-clattering youth, who were quick to defend Wilson's formidable reputation.

"What about his three minute mile?" asked a very senior member of Jesus College Oxford. "Have you forgotten his race against the Gazelle Boy?" protested a Wilson disciple from Leominster. "Against the Gazelle Boy he clocked 100 metres in 4.7 secs. It's all there in 'The Great Wilson Come Back' series."

Among the many communications from Wilson buffs was one from Ian R. Smith of the Association of Track and Field Statisticians

Phenomenal pen that rewrote the record books

The sporting world's two greatest athletes are sensationally found to have been related all along



— some 400,000 words in all. He never, as far as I can find, corrected or rewrote a word," Smith added. "And sometimes he would keep six or seven serial stories going at the same time. A single story, by the way, for *The Wizard*, averaged 5,000 words. Dalton is on record as having completed one such in two hours and twenty minutes."

The stories may have been

churned out at a record-breaking pace, but they had a grip on the imagination of many thousands of schoolboys. In 1948, for instance, despite the problems of wartime paper rationing and distribution, sales of *The Wizard*, complete with the latest exploits of Wilson, reached around 250,000 every other week — accounting for 6.5 million for the year.

When you consider how the comic would have been passed on from hand to grubby hand, the impact on a generation of young readers is enormous.

The true legacy of Wilson and Dalton, his creator, could be seen in the packs of boys who would try out their plimsoles and their dreams on the cinder tracks of the land. In terms of an athletic role model there was only one man who

The TOUGH OF THE TRACK



Tupper: modest background and scourge of the toffee noses of Oxford and Cambridge

could rival the appeal of Wilson — and that was that other great fictional hero, Alf Tupper, the "Tough of the Track".

Many young athletes, including one of Britain's finest marathon runners, Ron Hill, modelled themselves on Tupper. "He was the sort of character I could admire," Hill said, "an underprivileged lad who could always beat the toffee-noses from Oxford and Cambridge. He was always up against it, and he rose above it."

Rival fans of Wilson and Tupper would speculate endlessly over which of them might win in a head-to-head. And if it is in this matter that Ian Smith reveals the most surprising secret of all: the adventures of both of these phenomenal athletes came from the same pen. The Great Dalton was the author

behind them both. With both the Great Wilson and Alf Tupper in his stable, Dalton's record at having inspired young athletes must be as great as any gold medal-winging champion, and yet he was never a great sportsman himself. "He was lean and 6ft 6in," Smith said, "an athletic figure, but not an athlete."

There is a rumour that Dalton once penned a story putting Wilson and Tupper in the same race. Tupper, so the rumour goes, came second. The Millerman must be the true, for a, rumour. The venue should be the Dome.

Rivals could argue for years about the result, for sadly the man who gave life to both Tupper and Wilson died in 1963. But sport would have been poorer without the unforgettable achievements of the Great Gilbert Lawford Dalton.

SPORT IN BRIEF

Defeated Prince is king for a frame

SNOOKER: Jason Prince, the world No 39, from Northern Ireland, became only the fifth player to compile a maximum 147 break in professional competition and lose his match when he was beaten 5-4 by Ian Brumby of Liverpool, in the final qualifying round of the British Open at Blackpool yesterday (Phil Yates writes).

RUGBY LEAGUE: Salford Reds made their tenth signing of the close-season when Neil Baynes, 21, a prop forward who found first-team opportunities limited at Wigan Warriors, agreed a two-year contract yesterday (Christopher Irvine writes).

CRICKET: The venues of the first two Test matches on the Pakistan tour of India, which is under threat of disruption by Hindu right-wing activists, have been swapped. Madras hosts the opening Test from January 26 and Delhi the second, from February 4.

RUGBY UNION: Gloucester have arranged their home Tolley's Bitter Cup match with Henley, surprise conquerors of Bedford, for Saturday, January 30 to avoid a clash with neighbours Lydney, whose game with Saracens, the holders, takes place the next day.

CYCLING: Richard Virenque, who had announced his retirement after the disrupted Tour of France last year, will race for Polti, the Italian professional team, in the new season. Virenque was the leading competitor in the Festina team that was thrown out of the Tour for allegedly using banned substances.

FOOTBALL: Sydney's Olympic Stadium for the 2000 Games will be inaugurated on June 12 with a match between Australia and a Rest of the World XI.

TENNIS

Graf wins first leg of Williams challenge

FROM JULIAN MUSCAT, TENNIS CORRESPONDENT IN SYDNEY

THOSE still unmoved by the women's game would have left the splendidly ageing White City complex here yesterday with food for thought after watching Steffi Graf douse Serena Williams's rampant ambition in their second round match in the Sydney International tournament.

From the bowls of a site on the verge of retirement, Graf sent out the message that she still has plenty to offer. The German, 29, last played here 15 years ago, when Williams's sole fashion accessory would have been a nappy, and by the way she emerged victorious from an unrelenting duel, announced herself as a leading force for the Australian Open next week.

Graf, having beaten Serena, 17, the younger of the Williams sisters by 6-2, 3-6, 7-5, next has to face up to Venus Williams. Whether she harbours enough resilience this early in the season to complete the family double must be open to some doubt, but Graf showed enough to worry her contemporaries when the curtain rises in Melbourne on Monday.

The outcome was in the balance for every one of the 148 minutes that Graf and Williams locked horns. The standard rarely reached exalted heights until the deciding set, when both women struck the ball with unbridled ferocity.

Quite what motivates Anna Kournikova is anyone's guess. The Russian, who served one game full of double-faults to 16, again succumbed tamely, this time to Dominique Mothais, 17, from France, to 6-1, 6-2.

In her past five matches, Kournikova has now dished up a mind-boggling 93 double-faults. Curiously, her rapid decline dates back to the occasion, in October, when she lent her name to a series of coaching articles in a German magazine — on how to serve.

One cannot help but bemoan the fact that Britain has no budding talent like Leyton Hewitt, of Australia, who followed up his first-



A fired-up Graf left no doubt about how highly she valued her win over Serena Williams

round defeat of Pai Rafter by downing Nicolas Kiefer, of Germany, for the second time in a week.

Hewitt, 17, who burst into prominence when winning in Adelaide 12 months ago, overcame Andre Agassi en route, is far from the finished article but his positive attitude shamed Kiefer.

Richard Krajicek, of Holland, gave way to self-admission after losing to Jason Stoltenberg, of Australia. Krajicek, among the favourites for

the Australian Open, expected a stronger showing despite his lack of conditioning after knee surgery seven weeks ago.

"I could have got much more out of that match," Krajicek said. "I was happy with some points, but I need to find greater consistency." With Marcelo Rios suffering from a hamstring strain and Pete Sampras missing the Australian Open, Krajicek must have fancied his chances of having a successful tournament in Melbourne, but his form

expression spoke volumes of his disappointment at failing to find his touch.

Tim Hermann, another with much to gain from the tribulations affecting Sampras and Rios, yesterday succumbed to Mark Philippoussis, of Australia, in his opening match at the Colonial Classic, an eight-man exhibition event in Melbourne. Philippoussis, who ousted Hermann from the US Open in September, rallied from dropping the opening set to prevail 2-6, 6-4, 6-4.

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Sleepless Anderson gives Wood wake-up

By DAVID RHTS JONES

WILLIE WOOD, who lost in the final of the world indoor singles championship ten years ago, was defeated in the preliminary round of the 1999 event at Potters Leisure Resort in Norfolk yesterday by Steve Anderson, from Australia. 7-4, 7-4, 17-17, 7-5.

Anderson, who has been sampling the delights of the resort well into the early hours of the morning, revealed that he has also been getting up early to practise. "I believe players in tournaments like this have a duty to mix with the locals, and the late nights have helped me relax," he said.

Dropping a single on the next end, Wood should have taken advantage of a lapse on the following end from Anderson, whose nearest bowl was

BOWLS

almost a yard from the jack. Wood's first three bowls were so far away that he took the draw and decided to fire with his last bowl, in an attempt to ditch the jack. "I'm normally pretty good at the drive," he said. "I had the best back bowl, and realised I had a chance to win the game, but I was off target. It was very disappointing, because it was a match I should have won."

Griffith Sanders, whose appeal against a ten-year ban from Devon's outdoor greens comes up at Worthing tomorrow, has failed to force his way into

England's indoor side for the international series in Bournemouth in March, despite playing well in the trials last weekend. The selectors have dropped two stalwarts from Norfolk, David Ward, who made his international debut in 1983, and John Ottaway, who has been a regular at lead since 1985.

In an attempt to turn the tide after eight dismal years, they have introduced four new caps. Les Gillett, Tim Houghton, Mark Royal and Mark Smith, and recalled three former internationals, Stuart Airey, Danny Denison and Mervyn King.

Gillies, who won the Interna-

tional Open in 1997, was named as reserve last year, but created a record during the summer when he qualified for the national championships in all four events and played in 21 out of a possible 24 sessions over 11 days.

ENGLAND SQUAD: Blue 1: J. Reddick, R. Sanders, W. Jackson (Durham), S. Warren (Gloucester), D. C. Cook (Tregaron), D. Ward (Norfolk), J. Ottaway (Norfolk), G. Gillett (Chipping Norton), J. L. Lemon (Stanley), A. E. Thompson (Croydon), Blue 2: M. Smith (West Royal), R. Sampson (Wimborne), S. Airey (Bath), D. Denison (Tiverton), M. King (Bath), J. Ottaway (Norfolk), Blue 3: M. Royal (Bath), M. Smith (West Royal), Blue 4: M. Gillies (Bath), M. King (Bath), Blue 5: J. Ottaway (Norfolk), Blue 6: D. Houghton (Bromsgrove), Blue 7: S. Airey (Bath), D. Denison (Tiverton), Blue 8: M. Royal (Bath), Blue 9: N. Carrington (Macclesfield), Blue 10: S. Sanders (West Royal), Blue 11: D. Ottaway (Norfolk), Blue 12: D. Denison (Tiverton), Blue 13: M. Gillies (Bath), Blue 14: J. Ottaway (Norfolk), Blue 15: S. Airey (Bath), Blue 16: D. Denison (Tiverton), Blue 17: M. Royal (Bath), Blue 18: N. Carrington (Macclesfield), Blue 19: M. Gillies (Bath), Blue 20: J. Ottaway (Norfolk), Blue 21: S. 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Gillies (Bath), Blue 182: J. Ottaway (Norfolk), Blue 183: S. Airey (Bath), Blue 184: D. Denison (Tiverton), Blue 1

RUGBY UNION

Bristol face rival bid in battle for London Scottish

BY MARK SOISTER

AS THE proposed takeover of London Scottish by Bristol ran into further obstacles yesterday, it emerged that a consortium of four prominent Scottish businessmen was preparing to make a rival bid. London Scottish's 500 season ticket-holders are ready to issue an injunction claiming breach of contract if Tony Parks sells the club, for a reported figure of £1 million, while supporters say they intend to stage a protest at half-time of the game away to Leicester on Saturday.

It is understood any merger could contravene Rugby Football Union (RFU) and possibly International Board regulations, while English First Division Rugby (EFDR) is concerned that the timing of the deal, in mid-season, sets a dangerous and complicated precedent. Bristol are acting to ensure they cannot be excluded from any Anglo-Welsh League next season, but a further problem concerns

Final details of the proposed London Scottish takeover have

not been revealed, leaving the authorities unsure on what grounds objections could be raised.

In broad terms however, EFDR's lawyers have advised the senior clubs that they could undermine the takeover by refusing to play league fixtures against Bristol. Howard Thomas, EFDR's chief executive, said: "Our big problem is the timing. If it happens in mid-season it opens up a can of worms. We also believe this would need English Rugby Partnership approval."

RFU regulations stipulate that no club can have more than a 25 per cent stake in another and that any intention to merge should be declared by May 1 of the preceding season. On that basis the takeover would appear to be doomed. Malcolm Pearce, the owner of Bristol, admitted yesterday that the proposed scenario was not his preferred option, but one that was necessary to safeguard the club's future.

"We will do this if we have to," Pearce said. "For some strange reason the RFU has allowed avaricious proprietors of clubs in Premiership One to conjure up, in a smoke-filled room, a new competition that excludes us. I can't sit back because I have a responsibility to the players of Bristol as well as our sponsors."

One of the London Scottish team, Ronnie Erikson, said: "As players, we don't know when we go to bed what the situation will be in the morning. We are very frustrated but are trying to carry on as normal."

Elaine Watterson, the chairman of the London Scottish Supporters' Association, said the planned protest at Welford Road had the full backing and co-operation of Leicester supporters. "We are disgusted by what is going on. Gobsmacked. We will make our feelings known on Saturday," she said.

■ Bath moved to solve their scrum-half crisis yesterday by signing Andy Gomarsall on a month's loan from Wasps.

are unlikely to entertain the suggestion that Ballymena's and Dungannon's matches a week earlier also be postponed.

The Ulster management must hope, therefore, that none of their key players sustain injury between now and the end of the month. They can select only from players registered at the start of the season and though they have no prospect of Mark McCall or James Tipping being able to play, there is optimism that Stanley McDowell, the centre, will have recovered.

The final, to be referred by Clayton Thomas of Wales, will also be the perfect stage for Ulster's international prospects to stake their claims, notably Simon Mason, Allen Clarke and Mark Blair.

BOXING: TITLE CHALLENGER BLAMES LOST ENTHUSIASM

Wharton walks away from the ring

BY OUR SPORTS STAFF

HENRY WHARTON yesterday announced his retirement less than a month before he was due to challenge for three titles. He told Gary Atkin, his trainer, that he had lost his enthusiasm for the sport.

Wharton, 31, from York, was to have boxed Crawford Ashley, of Leeds, at Halifax on February 6 with the European, British and Commonwealth light-heavyweight titles at stake.

The contest had been eagerly awaited and was to provide Wharton with another chance to move into contention for a world title after three unsuccessful attempts at wresting the world super-middleweight crown from Nigel Benn, Chris Eubank and Robin Reid.

Atkin said: "The strange thing about this is that he's never been in better shape."

He's been quieter than normal but I put that down to the build-up. He could have beaten Crawford, but it's his career and nobody but Henry knows how he feels.

"He told me that his enthusiasm had gone, but at least he's been honest about it. He could have just taken the money and run." Atkin added that there was "not a chance" of Wharton reversing his decision.

Whaley will now defend his titles against Clinton Woods of Sheffield, the former Commonwealth super-middleweight champion.

Collins, who has spent his time since his retirement appearing in the film *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, and a video featuring the rock group U2, is hoping the contest will take place in his home city of Dublin.

The fight is on, and if we can get it in Dublin that would be the icing on the cake."

FOR THE RECORD

BOWLS

HOOTON-ON-SEA: Northern: World indoor: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th, 101st, 102nd, 103rd, 104th, 105th, 106th, 107th, 108th, 109th, 110th, 111th, 112th, 113th, 114th, 115th, 116th, 117th, 118th, 119th, 120th, 121st, 122nd, 123rd, 124th, 125th, 126th, 127th, 128th, 129th, 130th, 131st, 132nd, 133rd, 134th, 135th, 136th, 137th, 138th, 139th, 140th, 141st, 142nd, 143rd, 144th, 145th, 146th, 147th, 148th, 149th, 150th, 151st, 152nd, 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GOLF: EAGER BRITON STEALS A MARCH ON RIVALS IN EFFORT TO CLIMB RANKINGS

Faldo sets sights on revival

FROM JOHN HOPKINS
GOLF CORRESPONDENT
IN JOHANNESBURG

AT THE Houghton Golf Club on the high veld, the sun shines on the pale faces of those golfers who have flown in from colder climates. It is just past midsummer and the air is clear and dry and the clouds are high. They are almost as high, in fact, as the hopes of many of the players beginning the last season of the century on professional golf's European Tour.

The Alfred Dunhill SA PGA championship starts this morning, the first event in a season of great moment and change. It is not just Nick Faldo who says, as he did yesterday: "This is a big golf year. There has not been one like this for some time. I shall play about 27 events this year, whereas recently it has been down to 22."

Indeed, the hopes and fears for 1999 can best be expressed through the eyes of two men, one of whom is Faldo, who has returned to the country that he first visited as an amateur 24 years ago at the beginning of his attempt to climb back up the world rankings. The other is David Carter, who won his first tournament in Europe last season and then, when partnered by Faldo, captured the World Cup for England in New Zealand last November.

"I am here to get some golf in, to play for Ryder Cup points and world ranking points," Faldo said. He will play in Cape Town next week and Durban next month before flying to the United States, intent on fashioning the improvement that he needs if he is to achieve his stated ambition of being a winner once again.

Perhaps plagued by off-course worries, which now seem to have been resolved, he has plummeted drastically since 1996, the year in which he won the Masters. At the end of 1996, he was ranked No 6 in the world. He fell to No 17 in 1997 and No 66 last November before finishing fourth in the Australian Open, a result that moved him up the list to No 57. "I have been told I'll be all right for the Andersen," Faldo said, referring to the elite matchplay event in February.

Carter, 26, is still suffering from pains in his left shoulder and arm, a reaction to years of bad posture. Yet, after his success with Faldo in Auckland and after his victory over Colin Montgomerie in a play-off for the Irish Open last year, he cannot wait to get started once again. He wants the improvement that he has shown in the European order of merit each year — from No 92 in 1995 to No 19 last year — to continue.

For Carter, this country is just like home. In fact, that is exactly what it is, although he lives in Surrey, looks and speaks like an Englishman and regards England as his home.



Faldo hones his game yesterday during the pro-am that preceded the Alfred Dunhill SA PGA championship

He was born and went to school in Johannesburg, grew up 20 minutes from Houghton and speaks Afrikaans. It is a big year for Faldo and Carter, a great player determined to recapture former glories and a rising star of the European Tour, which is starting, appropriately, on a tour that knows no boundaries, in South Africa, then the same is true for Ernie Els. Els, who was married at the end of last year and spent his honeymoon carreering around the west coast of this country in a four-wheel drive vehicle and sleeping under the stars, is anxious to rediscover his best form against one another.

To help, he has bought a

house at Wentworth, begun back-strengthening exercises and slightly remodelled his swing. "Let's hope my golf has improved now. I'm married," Els, who won an event on this course in 1992, said grinning. "I have played twice since the wedding and I broke par both times, so that is encouraging."

In addition to the four major championships and an event such as the Players' Championship, which is a major championship in all but name, the 1999 golfing calendar contains a Walker Cup at Nairn at the beginning of September and a Ryder Cup in Boston, Massachusetts, at the end of the same month. Little can match the raw excitement generated

by a team competition in an individual sport and the prospect of these two events within 14 days of one another is mouthwatering.

This is not all. In 1999, there is a new-look professional golf. Three inaugural World Golf Championships (WGC) events are to be held — in California, in February, Ohio, in August, and Valderrama, Spain, in November. Prize money totals \$35 million at each, with a first prize of \$1 million. They are the start of a world tour for the game's best players, who will eventually circle the globe playing against one another.

The event at La Costa near San Diego in February is

matchplay for the top 64 golfers in the world rankings. The two others are strokeplay for fewer competitors. As prize-money counts both towards the Ryder Cup team and the Order of Merit, great efforts are being made by players to improve their world rankings while players who are nowhere near that level — men such as Severiano Ballesteros — continue to fume against the unfairness of it. When they say in essence is that the WGC seems to make sure that the rich get richer and richer. It is undeniable, but it is also life and one wonders whether Ballesteros would be saying the same sort of things if he were at his best?

MOTOR RALLYING

Ford lose their focus in water pump dispute

BY JEREMY HART

operation runs Subaru's rally team said. "It transpires Ford weren't just looking for an exemption to run the water pump in Monte Carlo, but until they had got the technical specification legalised. That is a non-standard water pump."

The three Japanese teams, Mitsubishi, Toyota and Subaru, represented under the banner of the Japanese Automobile Federation, yesterday overthrew their previous agreement to let Colin McRae's radical new car start the season, once new information about Ford's strategy came to light.

"Having agreed last week we found out a few things that changed the situation," David Richards, Ford's Director of European Motor Sport, said.

"I am absolutely sure that mistakes have been made, but Ford cannot be accused of trying to pull the wool over the other team's eyes." Martin Whitlaker, Ford's Director of European Motor Sport, said.

Last week, aware that there was no time to legalise the water pump before Monte Carlo, Malcolm Wilson, Ford Rally team principal, began contacting the other teams to secure their support for special dispensation to run the possibly performance-enhancing part. Their support seems to have proved short-lived.

A senior source at the FIA, motor sport's world governing body, said: "As the car stands at the moment it is illegal. We would not be in a position to change the rules, freezing the specification of water pumps unless all the other teams agreed. Even then, we would still need to examine the issue to consider allowing it to run."

Only Peugeot have supported the change in regulations. The support of other teams now seems highly unlikely before Sunday. The rules have been tinkered with too many times. Now is time for some consistency in the sport," one team spokesman said.

The Ford team had secured the services of Colin McRae, for £6 million, but they had announced a substantial sponsorship deal with Martini Racing. "I have been assured that the car will run," McRae said.

WORD-WATCHING

Answers from page 42

ABAND

(b) To abandon or forsake. An artificial contraction of abandoun, used by Spenser and other Elizabethan affecters of archaism, probably in imitation of pairs like open/ope. Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 1590: "And Voriger enforst the kingdom to aband."

BARBE

(c) A respectful title given by the Vaudois to their teachers. The Swiss French, Italian and Romansch versions mean "uncle", literally "bearded one".

BOUCHET

(c) A pear. Supposed to be an application of the French bouchet, a drink composed of sugar, cinnamon and water.

BROOL

(c) A low, deep humming sound. A murmur. Also brooting. Apparently an adaption of the Teutonic, eg Dutch broulen, to roar (as a lion). Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, 1837: "Like to the brool of the royal forest-voice."

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BOXING 42

Foul-mouthed Tyson continues on his pre-fight offensive

SPORT

THURSDAY JANUARY 14 1999

Former England coach hopes to escape Crystal Palace crisis

Venables demands pay-off

BY MATT DICKINSON

IT ALWAYS seemed unlikely that Crystal Palace could afford a manager of Terry Venables's impressive stature or even more impressive wage demands, and so it has proved. The nightmare for Mark Goldberg, the club's owner, is that he cannot afford to get rid of him either.

It is amid such financial chaos that Venables will sit down with Goldberg later today and attempt to thrash out a pay-off for his £1 million-a-year contract that has lasted little more than six months of its projected five years. The former England coach is believed to want a seven-figure sum to ease his departure.

Where Goldberg will find the money from, though, is anybody's guess, including his bank manager's, because he appears to be struggling to pay even the milkman. His credi-

Cruyff in loan deal... page 45
Sad end for Yeovil... page 45

tors include his lawyers, who are seeking £375,000, and even Palace players, with Antonio Lombardo reported to be on strike until he is paid £100,000. In buying the club for £22.8 million last year, the former computer tycoon clearly failed to do his sums.

Of course, Venables knows all about financial disorder and even if he is attempting to escape a monetary minefield on this occasion, it is another episode that will be turned against him by those who believe that it is silver rather than silverware that inspires him. He may walk away with his bank balance enhanced, but neither his coaching credentials nor his credibility have prospered.

His departures from Tottenham, Hotspur, the England post and Portsmouth have all been overshadowed by financial controversies and even a ban from being a company director for seven years has not dampened his enthusiasm for entrepreneurial gambles. He has invested heavily in a Spanish golf and leisure resort to rival La Manga and it is to Europe that Venables may



Venables, trying to plot a return to the FA Carling Premiership, has failed to keep Palace in form on the pitch while the club struggles off it

look for work next if he stays in coaching. The job opportunities in the FA Carling Premiership are limited at present, although that situation may not last long.

That is all assuming that Venables does depart Palace today, which is far from certain, given Goldberg's precarious financial state. He may ask Venables to remain in the role of consultant while he attempts to clear his debts.

"I am not going to forecast what's going to happen today," Venables said last night. "I am going in there to listen. Mark

has got some things to sort out, so it is up to him. I will be taking training as normal."

Goldberg's problems stem back even as far as the original takeover of Palace from Ron Noades, now chairman and manager of Brentford, for a hugely inflated sum. Noades, who still owns the freehold of Selhurst Park and the Goldstone training ground, is understood to be owed £5 million.

Like other millionaires before him, Goldberg appears to have allowed ambitions of sporting glory to override all business acumen. Star-struck by Venables, he as good as allowed the former Barcelona and Australia coach to write his own contract, which not only ensured that he was better paid than Alex Ferguson

and Arsène Wenger, the managers of Manchester United and Arsenal, but also able to walk out after a year.

Goldberg also rashly recruited dozens of commercial and business staff, many of whom now face losing their jobs, without investing as heavily in a team that now languishes 11 points off the play-off places in the Nationwide League first division.

Players have to be sold, but only Matt Jansen is worth a substantial sum. The forward's loyalties are to Newcastle United, the club that he supported as a boy, but Blackburn Rovers, Arsenal and Manchester United are also interested, although not at the £4.5 million fee that Goldberg has agreed with Newcastle. It is the sale of Jansen, against his

wishes, on top of the departure of Paul Warhurst to Bolton Wanderers for £800,000, that has convinced Venables that his job is impossible, but it may now allow him to receive his pay-off.

Ted Buxton and Terry Fenwick are also likely to depart the club, with Steve Coppell, the technical director, stepping into the breach for his third period as Palace coach. What Goldberg will do in the longer term, however, is uncertain. Supporters were already voicing the name of Dave Bassett yesterday after his recent departure from Nottingham Forest, but they are likely to discover that even he is out of Goldberg's price range these days.

Georgi Kinkladze, the former Manchester City mid-

field player, is preparing to find a new club, in the wake of Ajax's announcement that he no longer figures in their plans.

During his time at Maine Road, Liverpool were believed to be interested in signing the Georgia international, although Everton were the only club to table a formal offer. Kinkladze left City for Ajax for £5 million last summer, and the Nationwide League second division club has first option to buy him back.

West Ham United have bought Scott Minto, the full back from Benfica for £1 million. The former Chelsea player flew into London yesterday to wrap up the move and will be challenging for a place against Sheffield Wednesday on Saturday.

England bid goes on the offensive

BY OUR SPORTS STAFF

THERE was always likely to be a war of words. As the leading contenders to stage the World Cup finals in 2006 made their pitches at the Expo '98 football trade fair in Camer, they — that is England, South Africa and Germany — were jostling under the spotlight, each admiring that theirs was destined to the winning bid.

England went into bat first. Sir Bobby Charlton and Sir Geoff Hurst, displaying impressive confidence in the English campaign, "I hear things from Germany and South Africa about why English football makes mistakes and why the World Cup should not come to England". Sir Bobby said, "but the one thing that is consistent is that every time a statement comes out from one of our competitors about the World Cup, they invariably mention England."

"Now why is that? It's because they are afraid of us and they respect the strength of our bid and they know that to win the World Cup themselves, the people they have to beat are the English."

Sir Geoff pointed out that England has the necessary stadiums, security, telecommunications, transport, hotels and experience, through hosting Euro 96, to succeed.

German and South African officials were not best pleased. Danny Jordaan, the South Africa campaign chief executive, responded: "Sir Bobby is entitled to his opinion, but we are not afraid of them." He added, that the Football Association's recent scandals would have "consequences" for the English bid if they were proved to have been linked to the World Cup campaign.

Question marks still remain over South Africa's ability to host the tournament, but Jordaan maintained that his country was close already to meeting the stringent requirements laid down by Fifa, the world governing body, whose 24 executive members will choose the successful bid in March next year.

Germany did not make a formal presentation, but Franz Beckenbauer, the former World Cup-winning captain and manager, was on hand to renew claims that England had gone back upon a "gentleman's agreement" to back Germany's claims in return for support before Euro 96.

GOLF 46

Faldo seeks return to winning ways at start of a big year

Warren pays £7.2m to King

BY JOHN GOODBODY

FRANK WARREN, the British boxing promoter, agreed yesterday to pay £7.2 million to Don King to settle their long-running dispute over their former partnership. Despite the acrimony between the men, they shook hands outside the High Court in London, where the settlement was formally agreed.

Warren said afterwards that it was "cheap at the price" to settle the row. He said that he had the money to pay the colourful American promoter, but would be dining tonight on "soup in a basket".

Under the deal, Warren acknowledged his obligation to pay King in recognition of his rights as a partner and withdrew publicly all the allegations that he had made against King and his company, Don King Promotions.

According to King's lawyers, Warren has agreed, if necessary, to sell his luxurious house in Hertfordshire to make the first of a series of

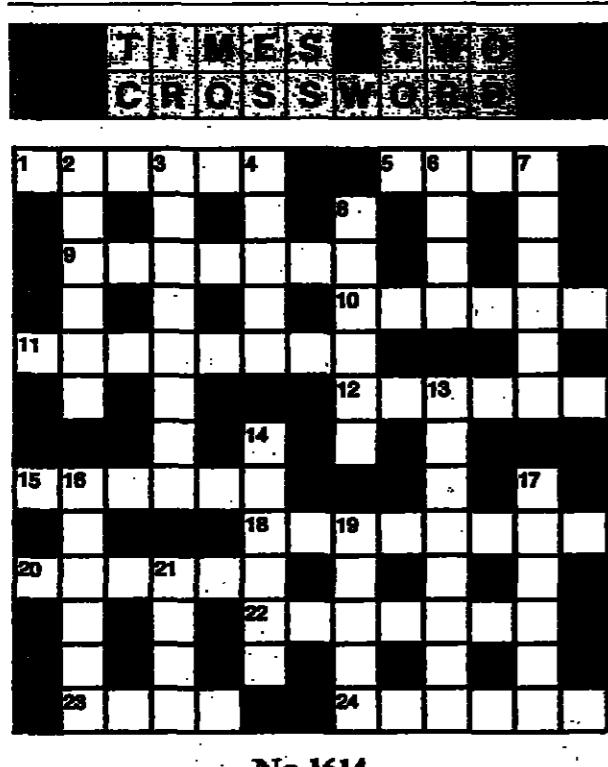


Warren: high price

agreed payments. This season, Warren has had problems in paying the players of Bedford rugby club, of which he is the owner.

One of the biggest disputes between the two men was a claim of Don King Productions Inc that it was entitled to a share of all profits made by Warren during the partnership from British and European boxers, including Naseem Hamed, the World Boxing Association featherweight champion.

Asked if he would still set up contests for Hamed in the United States, King replied: "Naseem is a very good fighter. I will speak to him if he were to ask. The UK guys need a commitment and I will give them that commitment to help those who are less fortunate."



No 1614

ACROSS
1 One owing feudal homage (6)
5 Feeble person; unwelcome plant (6)
9 One of a threesome (7)
10 Excuse think logically (6)
11 Deprive of movement (8)
12 Scale up (6)
15 Polished, sophisticated (6)
18 Present in quantity (8)
20 Periphery (6)
22 A language, type of bond, born (7)
23 Rough, impolite (4)
24 Area of influence; globe (6)

SOLUTION TO NO 1613
ACROSS 1 Chamber, 5 Rich, 9 Locum, 10 Cranium, 11 Mansfield, 12 Denure, 13 Island, 16 Ping-pong ball, 19 Squeeze, 20 Undid, 21 Tess, 22 Ephesus, 23 Rough, 7 Homunc, 8 Draft as a brush, 12 Deposit, 14 Alludes, 15 Sneeze, 17 Nouns, 18 Odds

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